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THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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TO MY FRIEND

FREDERICK JAMESON

CONTENTS OF VOL. I

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	ENTER DAME GOSSIP AS CHORUS	1
II.	MISTRESS GOSSIP TELLS OF THE ELOPEMENT OF THE COUNTESS OF CRESSETT WITH THE OLD BUCCANEER, AND OF CHARLES DUMP THE POSTILLION CONDUCTING THEM, AND OF A GREAT COUNTY FAMILY	15
III.	CONTINUATION OF THE INTRODUCTORY MEANDERINGS OF DAME GOSSIP, TOGETHER WITH HER SUDDEN EXTINCTION	27
IV.	MORNING AND FAREWELL TO AN OLD HOME	35
V.	A MOUNTAIN WALK IN MIST AND SUNSHINE	45
VI.	THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHER	59
VII.	THE LADY'S LETTER	71
VIII.	OF THE ENCOUNTER OF TWO STRANGE YOUNG MEN AND THEIR CONSORTING: IN WHICH THE MALE READER IS REQUESTED TO BEAR IN MIND WHAT WILD CREATURE HE WAS IN HIS YOUTH, WHILE THE FEMALE SHOULD MARVEL CREDULOUSLY	78
IX.	CONCERNING THE BLACK GODDESS FORTUNE AND THE WORSHIP OF HER, TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTION OF SOME OF HER VOTARIES	94

CHAP.		PAGE
X.	SMALL CAUSES	110
XI.	THE PRISONER OF HIS WORD	121
XII.	HENRIETTA'S LETTER TREATING OF THE GREAT EVENT	134
XIII.	AN IRRUPTION OF MISTRESS GOSSIP IN BREACH OF THE CONVENTION	142
XIV.	A PENDANT OF THE FOREGOING	157
XV.	OPENING STAGE OF THE HONEYMOON	160
XVI.	IN WHICH THE BRIDE FROM FOREIGN PARTS IS GIVEN A TASTE OF OLD ENGLAND	176
XVII.	RECORDS A SHADOW CONTEST CLOSE ON THE FOREGOING	187
XVIII.	DOWN WHITECHAPEL WAY	196
XIX.	THE GIRL MADGE	209
XX.	STUDIES IN FOG, GOUT, AN OLD SEAMAN, A LOVELY SERPENT, AND THE MORAL EFFECTS THAT MAY COME OF A BORROWED SHIRT	219
XXI.	IN WHICH WE HAVE FURTHER GLIMPSES OF THE WONDROUS MECHANISM OF OUR YOUNGER MAN	231
XXII.	A RIGHT-MINDED GREAT LADY	240
XXIII.	IN DAME GOSSIP'S VEIN	246
XXIV.	A KIDNAPPING AND NO GREAT HARM	262

THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

CHAPTER I

ENTER DAME GOSSIP AS CHORUS

Everybody has heard of the beautiful Countess of Cressett, who was one of the lights of this country at the time when crowned heads were running over Europe, crying out for charity's sake to be amused after their tiresome work of slaughter: and you know what a dread they have of moping. She was famous for her fun and high spirits besides her good looks, which you may judge of for yourself on a walk down most of our great noblemen's collections of pictures in England, where you will behold her as the goddess Diana fitting an arrow to a bow; and elsewhere an Amazon holding a spear; or a lady with dogs, in the costume of the day; and in one place she is a nymph, if not Diana herself, gazing at her naked feet before her attendants loosen her tunic for her to take the bath, and her hounds are pricking their ears, and you see antlers of a stag behind a block of stone. She was a wonderful swimmer, among other things, and one early morning, when she was a girl, she did really swim, they say, across the Shannon and back to win a bet for her brother Lord Levellier, the colonel of cavalry, who

left an arm in Egypt, and changed his way of life to become a wizard, as the common people about his neighbourhood supposed, because he foretold the weather and had cures for aches and pains without a doctor's diploma. But we know now that he was only a mathematician and astronomer, all for inventing military engines. The brother and sister were great friends in their youth, when he had his right arm to defend her reputation with; and she would have done anything on earth to please him.

There is a picture of her in an immense flat white silk hat trimmed with pale blue, like a pavilion, the broadest brim ever seen, and she simply sits on a chair; and Venus the Queen of Beauty would have been extinguished under that hat, I am sure; and only to look at Countess Fanny's eye beneath the brim she has tipped ever so slightly in her artfulness makes the absurd thing graceful and suitable. Oh! she was a cunning one. But you must be on your guard against the scandal-mongers and collectors of anecdotes, and worst of any, the critic of our Galleries of Art; for she being in almost all of them (the principal painters of the day were on their knees for the favour of a sitting), they have to speak of her pretty frequently, and they season their dish, the coxcombs do, by hinting a knowledge of her history.

'Here we come to another portrait of the beautiful but, we fear, naughty Countess of Cressett.'

You are to imagine that they know everything, and they are so indulgent when they drop their blot on a lady's character!

They can boast of nothing more than having read Nymney's *Letters and Correspondence*, published, for-

tunately for him, when he was no longer to be called to account below for his malicious insinuations, pretending to decency in initials and dashes. That man was a hater of women and the clergy. He was one of the horrid creatures who write with a wink at you, which sets the wicked part of us on fire: I have known it myself, and I own it to my shame; and if I happened to be ignorant of the history of Countess Fanny, I could not refute his wantonness. He has just the same benevolent leer for a bishop. Give me, if we are to make a choice, the beggar's breech for decency, I say: I like it vastly in preference to a Nymney, who leads you up to the curtain and agitates it, and bids you to retire on tiptoe. You cannot help being angry with the man for both reasons. But he is the writer society delights in, to show what it is composed of. A man brazen enough to declare that he could hold us in suspense about the adventures of a broomstick, with the aid of a yashmak and an ankle, may know the world; you had better not know him—that is my remark; and do not trust him.

He tells the story of the Old Buccaneer in fear of the public, for it was general property, but of course he finishes with a Nymney touch: 'So the Old Buccaneer is the doubloon she takes in exchange for a handful of silver pieces.' There is no such handful to exchange—not of the kind he sickeningly nudges at you. I will prove to you it was not Countess Fanny's naughtiness, though she was indeed very blamable. Women should walk in armour as if they were born to it; for these cold sneerers will never waste their darts on cuirasses. An independent brave young creature, exposing herself thoughtlessly in her

reckless innocence, is the victim for them. They will bring all society down on her with one of their explosive sly words appearing so careless, the cowards. I say without hesitation, her conduct with regard to Kirby, the Old Buccaneer, as he was called, however indefensible in itself, warrants her at heart an innocent young woman, much to be pitied. Only to think of her, I could sometimes drop into a chair for a good cry. And of him too! and their daughter Carinthia Jane was the pair of them, as to that, and so was Chillon John, the son.

Those critics quoting Nymney should look at the portrait of her in the Long Saloon of Cressett Castle, where she stands in blue and white, completely dressed, near a table supporting a couple of holster pistols, and then let them ask themselves whether they would speak of her so if her little hand could move.

Well, and so the tale of her swim across the Shannon river and back drove the young Earl of Cressett straight over to Ireland to propose for her, he saying, that she was the girl to suit his book; not allowing her time to think of how much he might be the man to suit hers. The marriage was what is called a good one: both full of frolic, and he wealthy and rather handsome, and she quite lovely and spirited.

No wonder the whole town was very soon agog about the couple, until at the end of a year people began to talk of them separately, she going her way, and he his. She could not always be on the top of a coach, which was his throne of happiness.

Plenty of stories are current still of his fame as a four-in-hand coachman. They say he once drove an Emperor and a King, a Prince Chancellor and a pair

of Field Marshals, and some ladies of the day, from the metropolis to Richmond Hill in fifty or sixty odd minutes, having the ground cleared all the way by bell and summons, and only a donkey-cart and man, and a deaf old woman, to pay for; and went, as you can imagine, at such a tearing gallop, that those Grand Highnesses had to hold on for their lives and lost their hats along the road; and a publican at Kew exhibits one above his bar to the present hour. And Countess Fanny was up among them, they say. She was equal to it. And some say, that was the occasion of her meeting the Old Buccaneer.

She met him at Richmond in Surrey we know for certain. It was on Richmond Hill, where the old King met his Lass. They say Countess Fanny was parading the hill to behold the splendid view, always admired so much by foreigners, with their Achs and Hechs! and surrounded by her crowned courtiers in frogged uniforms and moustachioed like sea-horses, a little before dinner time, when Kirby passed her, and the Emperor made a remark on him, for Kirby was a magnificent figure of a man, and used to be compared to a three-decker entering harbour after a victory. He stood six feet four, and was broad-shouldered and deep-chested to match, and walked like a king who has humbled his enemy. You have seen big dogs. And so Countess Fanny looked round. Kirby was doing the same. But he had turned right about, and appeared transfixed and like a royal beast angry with his wound. If ever there was love at first sight, and a dreadful love, like a runaway mail-coach in a storm of wind and lightning at black midnight by the banks of a flooded river, which was formerly our compari-

son for terrible situations, it was when those two met.

And, what! you exclaim, Buccaneer Kirby full sixty-five, and Countess Fanny no more than three and twenty, a young beauty of the world of fashion, courted by the highest, and she in love with him! Go and gaze at one of our big ships coming out of an engagement home with all her flags flying and her crew manning the yards. That will give you an idea of a young woman's feelings for an old warrior never beaten down an inch by anything he had to endure; matching him, I dare say, in her woman's heart, with the Mighty Highnesses who had only smelt the outside edge of battle. She did rarely admire a valiant man. Old as Methuselah, he would have made her kneel to him. She was all heart for a real hero.

The story goes, that Countess Fanny sent her husband to Captain Kirby, at the emperor's request, to inquire his name; and on hearing it, she struck her hands on her bosom, telling his Majesty he saw there the bravest man in the king's dominions; which the emperor scarce crediting, and observing that the man must be, then, a superhuman being to be so distinguished in a nation of the brave, Countess Fanny related the well-known tale of Captain Kirby and the shipful of mutineers; and how when not a man of them stood by him, and he in the service of the first insurgent State of Spanish America, to save his ship from being taken over to the enemy, he blew her up, fifteen miles from land: and so he got to shore swimming and floating alternately, and was called Old Sky-High by English sailors, any number of whom could always be had to sail under Buccaneer Kirby. He

fought on shore as well; and once he came down from the tops of the Andes with a black beard turned white, and went into action with the title of *Kirby's Ghost*.

But his heart was on salt water; he was never so much at home as in a ship foundering or splitting into the clouds. We are told that he never forgave the Admiralty for striking him off the list of English naval captains: which is no doubt why in his old age he nursed a grudge against his country.

Ours, I am sure, was the loss; and many have thought so since. He was a mechanician, a master of stratagems, and would say, that brains will beat Grim Death *if we have enough of them*. He was a standing example of the lessons of his own MAXIMS FOR MEN, a very curious book, that fetches a rare price now wherever a copy is put up for auction. I shudder at them as if they were muzzles of firearms pointed at me; but they were not addressed to my sex; and still they give me an interest in the writer who would declare, that '*he had never failed in an undertaking without stripping bare to expose to himself where he had been wanting in Intention and Determination.*'

There you may see a truly terrible man.

So the emperor being immensely taken with Kirby's method of preserving discipline on board ship, because (as we say to the madman, *Your strait-waistcoat is my easy-chair*) monarchs have a great love of discipline, he begged Countess Fanny's permission that he might invite Captain Kirby to his table; and Countess Fanny (she had the name from the ballad:

'I am the star of Prince and Czar,
My light is shed on many,
But I wait here till my bold Buccaneer
Makes prize of Countess Fanny:'—

for the popular imagination was extraordinarily roused by the elopement, and there were songs and ballads out of number), Countess Fanny despatched her husband to Captain Kirby again, meaning no harm, though the poor man is laughed at in the songs for going twice upon his mission.

None of the mighty people repented of having the Old Buccaneer—for that night, at all events. He sat in the midst of them, you may believe, like the lord of that table, with his great white beard and hair—not a lock of it shed—and his bronze lion-face, and a resolute but a merry eye that he had. He was no deep drinker of wine, but when he did drink, and the wine champagne, he drank to show his disdain of its powers; and the emperor wishing for a narrative of some of his exploits, particularly the blowing up of his ship, Kirby paid his Majesty the compliment of giving it him as baldly as an official report to the Admiralty. So disengaged and calm was he, with his bottles of champagne in him, where another would have been sparkling and laying on the colours, that he was then and there offered Admiral's rank in the Imperial navy; and the Old Buccaneer, like a courtier of our best days, bows to Countess Fanny, and asks her, if he is a free man to go: and, No, says she, we cannot spare you! And there was a pretty wrangle between Countess Fanny and the emperor, each pulling at the Old Buccaneer to have possession of him.

He was rarely out of her sight after their first meeting, and the ridiculous excuse she gave to her husband's family was, she feared he would be kidnapped and made a Cossack of! And young Lord Cressett, her husband, began to grumble concerning her intimacy

with a man old enough to be her grandfather. As if the age were the injury! He seemed to think it so, and vowed he would shoot the old depredator dead, if he found him on the grounds of Cressett: 'like vermin,' he said, and it was considered that he had the right, and no jury would have convicted him. You know what those days were.

He had his opportunity one moonlight night, not far from the castle, and peppered Kirby with shot from a fowling-piece at, some say, five paces' distance, if not point-blank.

But Kirby had a maxim, *Steady shakes them*, and he acted on it to receive his enemy's fire: and the young lord's hand shook, and the Old Buccaneer stood out of the smoke not much injured, except in the coat-collar, with a pistol cocked in his hand, and he said:—

'Many would take that for a declaration of war, but I know it's only your lordship's diplomacy'; and then he let loose to his mad fun, astounding Lord Cressett and his gamekeeper, and vowed, as the young lord tried to relate subsequently, as well as he could recollect the words—here I have it in print:—'*that he was a man pickled in saltpetre when an infant, like Achilles, and proof against powder and shot not marked with cross and key, and fetched up from the square magazine in the central dépôt of the infernal factory, third turning to the right off the grand arcade in Kingdom-come, where the night-porter has to wear wet petticoats, like a Highland chief, to make short work of the sparks flying about, otherwise this world and many another would not have to wait long for combustion.*'

Kirby had the wildest way of talking when he was not issuing orders under fire, best understood by sailors.

I give it you as it stands here printed. I do not profess to understand.

So Lord Cressett said: 'Diplomacy and infernal factories be hanged! Have your shot at me; it's only fair.' And Kirby discharged his pistol at the top twigs of an old oak tree, and called the young lord a Briton, and proposed to take him in hand and make a man of him, as nigh worthy of his wife as any one not an Alexander of Macedon could be.

So they became friendly, and the young lord confessed it was his family that had urged him to the attack; and Kirby abode at the castle, and all three were happy, in perfect honour, I am convinced: but such was not the opinion of the Cressetts and Levelliers. Down they trooped to Cressett Castle with a rush and a roar, crying on the disgrace of an old desperado like Kirby living there; Dukes, Marchionesses, Cabinet Ministers, leaders of fashion, and fire-eating colonels of the King's body-guard, one of whom Captain John Peter Kirby laid on his heels at ten paces on an April morning, when the duel was fought, as early as the blessed heavens had given them light to see to do it. Such days those were!

There was talk of shutting up the infatuated lady. If not incarcerated, she was rigidly watched. The earl her husband fell altogether to drinking and coaching, and other things. The ballad makes her say:—

'My family my gaolers be,
My husband is a zany;
Naught see I clear save my bold Buccaneer
To rescue Countess Fanny!'

and it goes on:—

'O little lass, at play on the grass,
Come earn a silver penny,
And you'll be dear to my bold Buccaneer
For news of his Countess Fanny.'

In spite of her bravery, that poor woman suffered!

We used to learn by heart the ballads and songs upon famous events in those old days when poetry was worshipped.

But Captain Kirby gave provocation enough to both families when he went among the taverns and clubs, and vowed before Providence over his big fist that they should rue their interference, and he would carry off the lady on a day he named; he named the hour as well, they say, and that was midnight of the month of June. The Levelliers and Cressetts foamed at the mouth in speaking of him, so enraged they were on account of his age and his passion for a young woman. As to blood, the Kirbys of Lincolnshire were quite equal to the Cressetts of Warwick. The Old Buccaneer seems to have had money too. But you can see what her people had to complain of: his insolent contempt of them was unexampled. And their tyranny had roused my lady's high spirit not a bit less, and she said right out: 'When he comes, I am ready and will go with him.'

There was boldness for you on both sides! All the town was laughing and betting on the event of the night in June: and the odds were in favour of Kirby; for though Lord Cressett was quite the popular young English nobleman, being a capital whip and free of his coin, in those days men who had smelt powder were often prized above titles, and the feeling, out of society, was very strong for Kirby, even previous to the fight on

the heath. And the age of the indomitable adventurer must have contributed to his popularity. He was the hero of every song.

' "What's age to me!" cries Kirby;
"Why, young and fresh let her be,
But it's mighty better reasoned
For a man to be well seasoned,
And a man she has in me," cries Kirby.'

As to his exact age :—

' "Write me down sixty-three," cries Kirby.'

I have always maintained that it was an understatement. We must remember, it was not Kirby speaking, but the song-writer. Kirby would not, in my opinion, have numbered years he was proud of below their due quantity. He was more, if he died at ninety-one; and Chillon Switzer John Kirby, born eleven months after the elopement, was, we know, twenty-three years old when the old man gave up the ghost and bequeathed him little besides a law-suit with the Austrian Government, and the care of Carinthia Jane, the second child of this extraordinary union: both children born in wedlock, as you will hear. Sixty-three, or sixty-seven, near upon seventy, when most men are reaping and stacking their sins with groans and weak knees, Kirby was a match for his juniors, which they discovered.

Captain John Peter Avason Kirby, son of a Lincolnshire squire of an ancient stock, was proud of his blood, and claimed descent from a chief of the Danish rovers.

' "What's rank to me!" cries Kirby;
"A titled lass let her be,
But unless my plans miscarry,
I'll show her when we marry,
As brave a pedigree," cries Kirby.'

That was the song-writer's answer to the charge that the countess had stooped to a degrading alliance.

John Peter was fourth of a family of seven children, all males, and hard at the bottle early in life: '*for want of proper occupation*,' he says in his Memoirs, and applauds his brother Stanson, the clergyman, for being ahead of him in renouncing strong drinks, because he found that he '*cursed better upon water*.' Water, however, helped Stanson Kirby to outlive his brothers and inherit the Lincolnshire property, and at the period of the great scandal in London he was palsied and waited on by his grandson and heir Ralph Thorkill Kirby, the hero of an adventure celebrated in our Law courts and on the English stage; for he took possession of his coachman's wife, and was accused of compassing the death of the husband. He was not hanged for it, so we are bound to think him not guilty.

The stage-piece is called *Saturday Night*, and it had an astonishing run, but is only remembered now for the song of 'Saturday,' sung by the poor coachman and labourers at the village ale-house before he starts to capture his wife from the clutches of her seducer and meets his fate. Never was there a more popular song: you heard it everywhere. I recollect one verse:—

> '*O Saturday money is slippery metal,*
> *And Saturday ale it is tipsy stuff:*
> *At home the old woman is boiling her kettle,*
> *She thinks we don't know when we've tippled enough.*
> *We drink, and of never a man are we jealous,*
> *And never a man against us will he speak:*
> *For who can be hard on a set of poor fellows*
> *Who only see Saturday once a week!*'

You chorus the last two lines.

That was the very song the unfortunate coachman of Kirby Hall joined in singing before he went out to face his end for the woman he loved. He believed in her virtue to the very last.

'*The ravished wife of my bosom*,' he calls her all through the latter half of the play. It is a real tragedy. The songs of that day have lost their effect now, I suppose. They will ever remain pathetic to me; and to hear the poor coachman William Martin invoking the name of his dear stolen wife Elizabeth, jug in hand, so tearfully, while he joins the song of Saturday, was a most moving thing. You saw nothing but handkerchiefs out all over the theatre. What it is that has gone from our drama, I cannot tell: I am never affected now as I was then; and people in a low station of life could affect me then, without being flung at me, for I dislike an entire dish of them, I own. We were simpler in our habits and ways of thinking. Elizabeth Martin, according to report, was a woman to make better men than Ralph Thorkill act evilly—as to good looks, I mean. She was not entirely guiltless, I am afraid; though in the last scene, Mrs. Kempson, who played the part (as, alas, she could do to the very life!), so threw herself into the pathos of it that there were few to hold out against her, and we felt that Elizabeth had been misled. So much for morality in those days!

And now for the elopement.

CHAPTER II

MISTRESS GOSSIP TELLS OF THE ELOPEMENT OF THE COUNTESS OF CRESSETT WITH THE OLD BUCCANEER, AND OF CHARLES DUMP THE POSTILLION CONDUCTING THEM, AND OF A GREAT COUNTY FAMILY

The twenty-first of June was the day appointed by Captain Kirby to carry off Countess Fanny, and the time midnight: and ten minutes to the stroke of twelve, Countess Fanny, as if she scorned to conceal that she was in a conspiracy with her grey-haired lover, notwithstanding that she was watched and guarded, left the Marchioness of Arpington's ball-room and was escorted downstairs by her brother Lord Levellier, sworn to baffle Kirby. Present with him in the street and witness to the shutting of the carriage-door on Countess Fanny, were brother officers of his, General Abrane, Colonel Jack Potts, and Sir Upton Tomber.

The door fast shut, Countess Fanny kissed her hand to them and drew up the window, seeming merry, and as they had expected indignation and perhaps resistance, for she could be a spitfire in a temper and had no fear whatever of firearms, they were glad to have her safe on such good terms; and so General Abrane jumped up on the box beside the coachman, Jack Potts jumped up between the footmen, and Sir Upton Tomber and the one-armed lord, as soon as the carriage was disengaged from the ruck two deep, walked on each side of it in the road all the way to Lord Cressett's town

house. No one thought of asking where that silly young man was—probably under some table.

Their numbers were swelled by quite a host going along, for heavy bets were on the affair, dozens having backed Kirby; and it must have appeared serious to them, with the lady in custody, and constables on the look-out, and Kirby and his men nowhere in sight. They expected an onslaught at some point of the procession, and it may be believed they wished it, if only that they might see something for their money. A beautiful bright moonlight night it happened to be. Arm in arm among them were Lord Pitscrew and Russett, Earl of Fleetwood, a great friend of Kirby's; for it was a device of the Old Buccaneer's that helped the earl to win the great Welsh heiress who made him, even before he took to hoarding and buying, one of the wealthiest noblemen in England; but she was crazed by her marriage or the wild scenes leading to it; she never presented herself in society. She would sit on the top of Estlemont towers—as they formerly spelt it—all day and half the night in midwinter, often, looking for the mountains down in her native West country, covered with an old white flannel cloak, and on her head a tall hat of her Welsh women-folk; and she died of it, leaving a son in her likeness, of whom you will hear. Lord Fleetwood had lost none of his faith in Kirby, and went on booking bets giving him huge odds, thousands!

He accepted fifty to one when the carriage came to a stop at the steps of Lord Cressett's mansion; but he was anxious, and well he might be, seeing Countess Fanny alight and pass up between two lines of gentlemen all bowing low before her: not a sign of the Old

Buccaneer anywhere to right or left! Heads were on the look out, and vows offered up for his appearance.

She was at the door and about to enter the house. Then it was, that with a shout of the name of some dreadful heathen god, Colonel Jack Potts roared out, 'She 's half a foot short o' the mark!'

He was on the pavement, and it seems he measured her as she slipped by him, and one thing and another caused him to smell a cheat; and General Abrane, standing beside her near the door, cried: 'Where art flying now, Jack?' But Jack Potts grew more positive and bellowed, 'Peel her wig! we 're done!'

And she did not speak a word, but stood huddled-up and hooded; and Lord Levellier caught her by the arm as she was trying a dash into the hall, and Sir Upton Tomber plucked at her veil and raised it, and whistled: 'Phew!'—which struck the rabble below with awe of the cunning of the Old Buccaneer; and there was no need for them to hear General Abrane say: 'Right! Jack, we 've a dead one in hand,' or Jack Potts reply: 'It 's ten thousand pounds clean winged away from my pocket, like a string of wild geese!'

The excitement of the varletry in the square, they say, was fearful to hear. So the principal noblemen and gentlemen concerned thought it prudent to hurry the young woman into the house and bar the door; and there she was very soon stripped of veil and blonde false wig with long curls, the whole framing of her artificial resemblance to Countess Fanny, and she proved to be a good-looking foreign maid, a dark one, powdered, trembling very much, but not so frightened upon hearing that her penalty for the share she had taken in the

horrid imposture practised upon them was to receive and return a salute from each of the gentlemen in rotation ; which the hussy did with proper submission ; and Jack Potts remarked, that 'it was an honest buss, but dear at ten thousand!'

When you have been the victim of a deceit, the explanation of the simplicity of the trick turns all the wonder upon yourself, you know, and the backers of the Old Buccaneer and the wagerers against him crowed and groaned in chorus at the maid's narrative of how the moment Countess Fanny had thrown up the window of her carriage, she sprang out to a carriage on the off side, containing Kirby, and how she, this little French jade, sprang in to take her place. One snap of the fingers and the transformation was accomplished. So for another kiss all round they let her go free, and she sat at the supper-table prepared for Countess Fanny and the party by order of Lord Levellier, and amused the gentlemen with stories of the ladies she had served, English and foreign. And that is how men are taught to think they know our sex and may despise it! I could preach them a lesson. Those men might as well not believe in the steadfastness of the very stars because one or two are reported lost out of the firmament, and now and then we behold a whole shower of fragments descending. The truth is, they have taken a stain from the life they lead, and are troubled puddles, incapable of clear reflection. To listen to the tattle of a chatting little slut, and condemn the whole sex upon her testimony, is a nice idea of justice. Many of the gentlemen present became notorious as woman-scorners, whether owing to Countess Fanny or other things. Lord Levellier was, and Lord Fleetwood, the wicked man! And

certainly the hearing of naughty stories of us by the light of a grievous and vexatious instance of our misconduct must produce an impression. Countess Fanny's desperate passion for a man of the age of Kirby struck them as out of nature. They talked of it as if they could have pardoned her a younger lover.

All that Lord Cressett said, on the announcement of the flight of his wife, was: 'Ah! Fan! she never would run in my ribbons.'

He positively declined to pursue. Lord Levellier would not attempt to follow her up without him, as it would have cost money, and he wanted all that he could spare for his telescopes and experiments. Who, then, was the gentleman who stopped the chariot, with his three mounted attendants, on the road to the sea, on the heath by the great Punch-Bowl?

That has been the question for now longer than half a century, in fact approaching seventy mortal years. No one has ever been able to say for certain.

It occurred at six o'clock on the summer morning. Countess Fanny must have known him, and not once did she open her mouth to breathe his name. Yet she had no objection to talk of the adventure, and how Simon Fettle, Captain Kirby's old ship's steward in South America, seeing horsemen stationed on the ascent of the high road bordering the Bowl, which is miles round and deep, made the postillion cease jogging, and sang out to his master for orders, and Kirby sang back to him to look to his priming, and then the postillion was bidden proceed, and he did not like it, but he had to deal with pistols behind, where men feel weak, and he went bobbing on the saddle in dejection, as if upon his very heart he jogged; and

soon the fray commenced. There was very little parleying between determined men.

Simon Fettle was a plain kindly creature without a thought of malice, who kept his master's accounts. He fired the first shot at the foremost man, as he related in after days, 'to reduce the odds.' Kirby said to Countess Fanny, just to comfort her, never so much as imagining she would be afraid, 'The worst will be a bloody shirt for Simon to mangle,' for they had been arranging to live cheaply in a cottage on the Continent, and Simon Fettle to do the washing. She could not help laughing outright. But when the Old Buccaneer was down striding in the battle, she took a pistol and descended likewise; and she used it, too, and loaded again.

She had not to use it a second time. Kirby pulled the gentleman off his horse, wounded in the thigh, and while dragging him to Countess Fanny to crave her pardon, a shot intended for Kirby hit the poor gentleman in the breast, and Kirby stretched him at his length, and Simon and he disarmed the servant who had fired. One was insensible, one flying, and those two on the ground. All in broad daylight; but so lonely is that spot, nothing might have been heard of it, if at the end of the week the postillion, who had been bribed and threatened with terrible threats to keep his tongue from wagging, had not begun to talk. So the scene of the encounter was examined, and on one spot, carefully earthed over, blood-marks were discovered in the green sand. People in the huts on the hill-top, a quarter of a mile distant, spoke of having heard sounds of firing while they were at breakfast, and a little boy named Tommy Wedger said he saw a

dead body go by in an open coach that morning, all bloody and mournful. He had to appear before the magistrates, crying terribly, but did not know the nature of an oath, and was dismissed. Time came when the boy learned to swear, and he did, and that he had seen a beautiful lady firing and killing men like pigeons and partridges; but that was after Charles Dump, the postillion, had been telling the story.

Those who credited Charles Dump's veracity speculated on dozens of great noblemen and gentlemen known to be dying in love with Countess Fanny. And this brings us to another family.

I do not say I know anything; I do but lay before you the evidence we have to fix suspicion upon a notorious character, perfectly capable of trying to thwart a man like Kirby, and with good reason to try, if she had bewitched him to a consuming passion, as we are told.

About eleven miles distant, as the crow flies and a bold huntsman will ride in that heath country, from the Punch-Bowl, right across the mounds and the broad water, lies the estate of the Fakenhams, who intermarried with the Coplestones of the iron mines, and were the wealthiest of the old county families until Curtis Fakenham entered upon his inheritance. Money with him was like the farm-wife's dish of grain she tosses in showers to her fowls. He was more than what you call a lady-killer, he was a woman-eater. His pride was in it as well as his taste, and when men are like that, indeed they are devourers!

Curtis was the elder brother of Commodore Baldwin Fakenham, whose offspring, like his own, were so strangely mixed up with Captain Kirby's children by

Countess Fanny, as you will hear. And these two brothers were sons of Geoffrey Fakenham, celebrated for his devotion to the French Countess Jules d'Andreuze, or some such name, a courtly gentleman, who turned Papist on his death-bed in France, in Brittany somewhere, not to be separated from her in the next world, as he solemnly left word; wickedly, many think.

To show the oddness of things and how opposite to one another brothers may be, his elder, the uncle of Curtis and Baldwin, was the renowned old Admiral Fakenham, better known along our sea-coasts and ports among sailors as 'Old Showery,' because of a remark he once made to his flag-captain, when cannon-balls were coming thick on them in a hard-fought action. 'Hot work, sir,' his captain said. 'Showery,' replied the admiral, as his cocked-hat was knocked off by the wind of a cannon-ball. He lost both legs before the war was over, and said merrily, '*Stumps for life!*' while they were carrying him below to the cockpit. In my girlhood the boys were always bringing home anecdotes of old Admiral Showery: not all of them true ones, perhaps, but they fitted him. He was a rough seaman, fond, as they say, of his glass and his girl, and utterly despising his brother Geoffrey for the airs he gave himself, and crawling on his knees to a female Parleyvoo; and when Geoffrey died, the admiral drank to his rest in the grave: '*There's to my brother Jeff*,' he said, and flinging away the dregs of his glass: '*There's to the Frog!*' and flinging away the glass to shivers: '*There's to the Turncoat!*'

He salted his language in a manner I cannot repeat; no epithet ever stood by itself. When I was young the

boys relished these dreadful words because they seemed to smell of tar and battle-smoke, when every English boy was for being a sailor and daring the Black Gentleman below. In all truth, the bad words came from him; though an excellent scholar has assured me they should be taken for aspirates, and mean no harm; and so it may be, but heartily do I rejoice that aspirates have been dropped by people of birth; for you might once hear titled ladies guilty of them in polite society, I do assure you.

We have greatly improved in that respect. They say the admiral's reputation as a British sailor of the old school made him, or rather his name, a great favourite at Court; but to Court he could not be got to go, and if the tale be true, their Majesties paid him a visit on board his ship, in harbour one day, and sailors tell you that Old Showery gave his liege lord and lady a common dish of boiled beef with carrots and turnips, and a plain dumpling, for their dinner, with ale and port wine, the merit of which he swore to; and he became so elate, that after the cloth was removed, he danced them a hornpipe on his pair of wooden legs, whistling his tune, and holding his full tumbler of hot grog in his hand all the while, without so much as the spilling of a drop!—so earnest was he in everything he did. They say his limit was two bottles of port wine at a sitting, with his glass of hot grog to follow, and not a soul could induce him to go beyond that. In addition to being a great seaman, he was a very religious man and a stout churchman.

Well, now, the Curtis Fakenham of Captain Kirby's day had a good deal of his uncle as well as his father in him, the spirit of one and the outside of the other;

and, favoured or not, he had been distinguished among Countess Fanny's adorers: she certainly chose to be silent about the name of the assailant. And it has been attested on oath that two days and a night subsequent to the date furnished by Charles Dump, Curtis Fakenham was brought to his house, Hollis Grange, lame of a leg, with a shot in his breast, that he carried to the family vault; and his head gamekeeper, John Wiltshire, a resolute fellow, was missing from that hour. Some said they had a quarrel, and Curtis was wounded and John Wiltshire killed. Curtis was known to have been extremely attached to the man. Yet when Wiltshire was inquired for, he let fall a word of '*having more of Wiltshire than was agreeable to Hampshire*'—his county. People asked what that meant. Yet, according to the tale, it was the surviving servant, by whom he, or whoever it may have been, was accidentally shot.

We are in a perfect tangle. On the other hand, it was never denied that Curtis and John Wiltshire were in London together at the time of Countess Fanny's flight: and Curtis Fakenham was one of the procession of armed gentlemen conducting her in her carriage, as they supposed; and he was known to have started off, on the discovery of the cheat, with horrible imprecations against Frenchwomen. It became known, too, that horses of his were standing saddled in his inn-yard at midnight. And more, Charles Dump the postillion was taken secretly to set eyes on him as they wheeled him in his garden-walk, and he vowed it was the identical gentleman. But this coming by and by to the ear of Curtis, he had Charles Dump fetched over to confront him; and then the man made oath that he

had never seen Mr. Curtis Fakenham anywhere but there, in his own house at Hollis! One does not really know what to think of it.

This postillion made a small fortune. He was everywhere in request. People were never tired of asking him how he behaved while the fight was going on, and he always answered that he sat as close to his horse as he could, and did not dream of dismounting; for, he said, '*he was a figure on a horse, and naught when off it.*' His repetition of the story, with some adornments, and that same remark, made him the popular man of the county; people said he might enter Parliament, and I think at one time it was possible. But a great success is full of temptations. After being hired at inns to fill them with his account of the battle, and tipped by travellers from London to show the spot, he set up for himself as innkeeper, and would have flourished, only he had contracted habits on his rounds, and he fell to contradicting himself, so that he came to be called *Lying Charley*; and the people of the country said it was '*he who drained the Punch-Bowl, for though he helped to put the capital into it, he took all the interest out of it.*'

Yet we have the doctor of the village of Ipley, Dr. Cawthorne, a noted botanist, assuring us of the absolute credibility of Charles Dump, whom he attended in the poor creature's last illness, when Charles Dump confessed he had lived in mortal terror of Squire Curtis, and had got the trick of lying, through fear of telling the truth. Hence his ruin.

So he died delirious and contrite. Cawthorne, the great Turf man, inherited a portrait of him from his father the doctor. It was often the occasion of the

story being told over again, and used to hang in the patient's reception-room, next to an oil-painting of the Punch-Bowl, an admired landscape picture by a local artist, highly-toned and true to every particular of the scene, with the bright yellow road winding up-hill, and the banks of brilliant purple heath, and a white thorn in bloom quite beautiful, and the green fir trees, and the big Bowl black as a cauldron,—indeed a perfect feast of harmonious contrasts in colours.

And now you know how it is that the names of Captain Kirby and Curtis Fakenham are alive to the present moment in the district.

We lived a happy domestic life in those old coaching days, when county affairs and county people were the topics of firesides, and the country enclosed us to make us feel snug in our own importance. My opinion is, that men and women grow to their dimensions only where such is the case. We had our alarms from the outside now and again, but we soon relapsed to dwell upon our private business and our pleasant little hopes and excitements; the courtships and the crosses and the scandals, the tea-parties and the dances, and how the morning looked after the stormy night had passed, and the coach coming down the hill with a box of news and perhaps a curious passenger to drop at the inn. I do believe we had a liking for the very high-waymen, if they had any reputation for civility. What I call human events, things concerning you and me, instead of the deafening catastrophes now afflicting and taking all conversation out of us, had their natural interest then. We studied the face of each morning as it came, and speculated upon the secret of the thing it might have in store for us or our heroes and heroines;

we thought of them more than of ourselves. Long after the adventures of the Punch-Bowl, our county was anxious about Countess Fanny and the Old Buccaneer, wondering where they were and whether they were prospering, whether they were just as much in love as ever, and which of them would bury the other, and what the foreign people abroad thought of that strange pair.

CHAPTER III

CONTINUATION OF THE INTRODUCTORY MEANDERINGS OF DAME GOSSIP, TOGETHER WITH HER SUDDEN EXTINCTION

I HAVE still time before me, according to the terms of my agreement with the person to whom I have, I fear foolishly, entrusted the letters and documents of a story surpassing ancient as well as modern in the wonderment it causes, that would make the Law courts bless their hearts, judges no less than the barristers, to have it running through them day by day, with every particular to wrangle over, and many to serve as a text for the pulpit. So to proceed.

It should be mentioned that the postillion Charles Dump is not represented, and I have no conception of the reason why not, sitting on horseback, in the portrait in the possession of the Cawthorne family. I have not seen it, I am bound to admit. We had offended Dr. Cawthorne, by once in an urgent case calling in another doctor, who, he would have it, was

a quack, that ought to have killed us, and we ceased to visit; but a gentleman who was an established patient of Dr. Cawthorne's and had frequent opportunities of judging the portrait, in the course of a chronic malady, describes Charles Dump on his legs as a small man looking diminished from a very much longer one by shrinkage in thickish wrinkles from the shoulders to the shanks. His hat is enormous and very gay. He is rather of sad countenance. An elevation of his collar behind the ears, and pointed at the neck, gives you notions of his having dropped from some hook. He stands with his forefinger extended, like a disused semaphore-post, that seems tumbling and desponding on the hill by the highroad, in his attitude while telling the tale; if standing it may be called, where the whole figure appears imploring for a seat. That was his natural position, as one would suppose any artist must have thought, and a horse beneath him. But it has been suggested that the artist in question was no painter of animals. Then why did he not get a painter of animals to put in the horse? It is vain to ask, though it is notorious that artists combine without bickering to do these things; and one puts his name on the animal, the other on the human being or landscape.

My informant adds, that the prominent feature, telling a melancholy tale of its own, is of sanguine colour, and while plainly in the act of speaking, Charles Dump might be fancied about to drop off to sleep. He was impressed by the dreaminess of the face; and I must say I regard him as an interesting character. During my girlhood Napoleon Bonaparte alone would have been his rival for filling an inn along our roads. I

have known our boys go to bed obediently and get up at night to run three miles to The Wheatsheaf, only to stand on the bench or traveller's-rest outside the window and look in at Charles Dump reciting, with just room enough in the crowd to point his finger, as his way was.

He left a child, Mary Dump, who grew up to become lady's maid to Livia Fakenham, daughter of Curtis, the beauty of Hampshire, equalled by no one save her cousin Henrietta Fakenham, the daughter of Commodore Baldwin; and they were two different kinds of beauties, not to be compared, and different were their fortunes; for this lady was likened to the sun going down on a cloudy noon, and that lady to the moon riding through a stormy night. Livia was the young widow of Lord Duffield when she accepted the Earl of Fleetwood, and was his third countess, and again a widow at eight-and-twenty, and stepmother to young Crœsus, the Earl of Fleetwood of my story. Mary Dump testifies to her kindness of heart to her dependents. If we are to speak of goodness, I am afraid there are other witnesses.

I resent being warned that my time is short and that I have wasted much of it over 'the attractive Charles.' What I have done I have done with a purpose, and it must be a story-teller devoid of the rudiments of his art who can complain of my dwelling on Charles Dump, for the world to have a pause and pin its faith to him, which it would not do to a grander person—that is, as a peg. Wonderful events, however true they are, must be attached to something common and familiar, to make them credible. Charles Dump, I say, is like a front-page picture to a history of those old quiet yet exciting

days in England, and when once you have seized him the whole period is alive to you, as it was to me in the delicious dulness I loved, that made us thirsty to hear of adventures and able to enjoy to the utmost every thing occurring. The man is no more attractive to me than a lump of clay. How could he be? But supposing I took up the lump and told you that there where I found it, *that lump of clay had been rolled over and flung off by the left wheel of the prophet's Chariot of Fire before it mounted aloft and disappeared in the heavens above!*—you would examine it and cherish it and have the scene present with you, you may be sure: and magnificent descriptions would not be one-half so persuasive. And that is what we call, in my profession, Art, if you please.

So to continue: the Earl of Cressett fell from his coach-box in a fit, and died of it, a fortnight after the flight of his wife; and the people said she might as well have waited. Kirby and Countess Fanny were at Lucerne or Lausanne, or some such place, in Switzerland when the news reached them, and Kirby, without losing an hour, laid hold of an English clergyman of the Established Church and put him through the ceremony of celebrating his lawful union with the beautiful young creature he adored. And this he did, he said, for the world to guard his Fan in a wider circle than his two arms could compass, if not quite so well.

So the Old Buccaneer was ever after that her lawful husband, and as his wedded wife, not wedded to a fool, she was an example to her sex, like many another woman who has begun badly with a light-headed mate. It is hard enough for a man to be married to a fool, but a man is only half-cancelled by that burden, it has been

said; whereas a woman finds herself on board a rudderless vessel, and often the desperate thing she does is to avoid perishing! Ten months, or eleven, some say, following the proclamation of the marriage-tie, a son was born to Countess Fanny, close by the castle of Chillon on the lake, and he had the name of Chillon Switzer John Kirby given to him to celebrate the fact. Two years later the girl was born, and for the reason of her first seeing the light in that Austrian province, she was christened Carinthia Jane. She was her old father's pet; but Countess Fanny gloried in the boy. She had fancied she would be a childless woman before he gave sign of coming; and they say she wrote a little volume of *Meditations in Prospect of Approaching Motherhood*, for the guidance of others in a similar situation.

I have never been able to procure the book or pamphlet, but I know she was the best of mothers, and of wives too. And she, with her old husband, growing like a rose out of a weather-beaten rock, proved she was that, among those handsome foreign officers poorly remarkable for their morals. Not once had the Old Buccaneer to teach them a lesson. Think of it and you will know that her feet did not stray—nor did her pretty eyes. Her heart was too full for the cravings of vanity. Innocent ladies who get their husbands into scrapes are innocent, perhaps; but knock you next door in their bosoms, where the soul resides, and ask for information of how innocence and uncleanness may go together. Kirby purchased a mine in Carinthia, on the borders of Styria, and worked it himself. His native land displeased him, so that he would not have been unwilling to see Chillon enter the Austrian ser-

vice, which the young man was inclined for, subsequent to his return to his parents from one of the English public schools, notwithstanding his passionate love for Old England. But Lord Levellier explained the mystery in a letter to his half-forgiven sister, praising the boy for his defence of his mother's name at the school, where a big brutal fellow sneered at her, and Chillon challenged him to sword or pistol; and then he walked down to the boy's home in Staffordshire to force him to fight; and the father of the boy made him offer an apology. That was not much balm to Master Chillon's wound. He returned to his mother quite heavy, unlike a young man; and the unhappy lady, though she knew him to be bitterly sensitive on the point of honour, and especially as to everything relating to her, saw herself compelled to tell him the history of her life, to save him, as she thought, from these chivalrous vindications of her good name. She may have even painted herself worse than she was, both to excuse her brother's miserliness to her son and the world's evil speaking of her. Wisely or not, she chose this course devotedly to protect him from the perils she foresaw in connection with the name of the once famous Countess Fanny in the British Isles. And thus are we stricken by the days of our youth. It is impossible to moralize conveniently when one is being hurried by a person at one's elbow.

So the young man heard his mother out and kissed her, and then he went secretly to Vienna and enlisted and served for a year as a private in the regiment of Hussars called, my papers tell me, Liechtenstein, and what with his good conduct and the help of Kirby's friends, he would have obtained a commission from the emperor, when, at the right moment to keep a sprig of

Kirby's growth for his country, Lord Levellier sent word that he was down for a cornetcy in a British regiment of dragoons. Chillon came home from a garrison town, and there was a consultation about his future career. Shall it be England? Shall it be Austria? Countess Fanny's voice was for England, and she carried the vote, knowing though she did that it signified separation, and it might be alienation—where her son would chance to hear things he could not refute. She believed that her son by such a man as Kirby would be of use to his country, and her voice, against herself, was for England.

It broke her heart. If she failed to receive the regular letter, she pined and was disconsolate. He has heard more of me! was in her mind. Her husband sat looking at her with his old large grey glassy eyes. You would have fancied him awaiting her death as the signal for his own release. But she, poor mother, behind her weeping lids beheld her son's filial love of her wounded and bleeding. When there was anything to be done for her, old Kirby was astir. When it was nothing, either in physic or assistance, he was like a great corner of rock. You may indeed imagine grief in the very rock that sees its flower fading to the withered shred. On the last night of her life this old man of past ninety carried her in his arms up a flight of stairs to her bed.

A week after her burial, Kirby was found a corpse in the mountain forest. His having called the death of his darling his lightning-stroke must have been the origin of the report that he died of lightning. He touched not a morsel of food from the hour of the dropping of the sod on her coffin of ebony wood. An

old crust of their mahogany bread, supposed at first to be a specimen of quartz, was found in one of his coat pockets. He kissed his girl Carinthia before going out on his last journey from home, and spoke some wandering words. The mine had not been worked for a year. She thought she would find him at the mouth of the shaft, where he would sometimes be sitting and staring, already dead at heart with the death he saw coming to the beloved woman. They had to let her down with ropes, that she might satisfy herself he was not below. She and her great dog and a faithful manservant discovered the body in the forest. Chillon arrived from England to see the common grave of both his parents.

And now good-bye to sorrow for a while. Keep your tears for the living. And first I am going to describe to you the young Earl of Fleetwood, son of the strange Welsh lady, the richest nobleman of his time, and how he pursued and shunned the lady who had fascinated him, Henrietta, the daughter of Commodore Baldwin Fakenham; and how he met Carinthia Jane; and concerning that lovely Henrietta and Chillon Kirby-Levellier; and of the young poet of ordinary parentage, and the giant Captain Abrane, and Livia the widowed Countess of Fleetwood, Henrietta's cousin, daughter of Curtis Fakenham; and numbers of others; Lord Levellier, Lord Brailstone, Lord Simon Pitscrew, Chumley Potts, young Ambrose Mallard; and the English pugilist, such a man of honour though he drank; and the adventures of Madge, Carinthia Jane's maid. Just a few touches. And then the marriage dividing Great Britain into halves, taking sides. After that, I trust you may go on, as I would carry you were we all

twenty years younger, had I but sooner been in possession of these treasured papers. I promise you excitement enough, if justice is done to them. But I must and will describe the wedding. This young Earl of Fleetwood, you should know, was a very powder-magazine of ambition, and never would he break his word: which is right, if we are properly careful; and so he—

She ceases. According to the terms of the treaty, the venerable lady's time has passed. An extinguisher descends on her, giving her the likeness of one under condemnation of the Most Holy Inquisition, in the ranks of an *auto da fé*; and singularly resembling that victim at the first sharp bite of the flames she will be when she hears the version of her story.

CHAPTER IV

MORNING AND FAREWELL TO AN OLD HOME

Brother and sister were about to leave the mountain-land for England. They had not gone to bed over-night, and from the windows of their deserted home, a little before dawn, they saw the dwindled moon, a late riser, break through droves of hunted cloud, directly topping their ancient guardian height, the triple peak and giant of the range, friendlier in his name than in aspect for the two young people clinging to the scene they were to quit. His name recalled old

days: the apparition of his head among the heavens drummed on their sense of banishment.

To the girl, this was a division of her life, and the dawn held the sword. She felt herself midswing across a gulf that was the grave of one half, without a light of promise for the other. Her passionate excess of attachment to her buried home robbed the future of any colours it might have worn to bid a young heart quicken. And England, though she was of British blood, was a foreign place to her, not alluring: her brother had twice come out of England reserved in speech; her mother's talk of England had been unhappy; her father had suffered ill-treatment there from a brutal institution termed the Admiralty, and had never regretted the not seeing England again. The thought that she was bound thitherward enfolded her like a frosty mist. But these bare walls, these loud floors, chill rooms, dull windows, and the vault-sounding of the ghostly house, everywhere the absence of the faces in the house, told her she had no choice, she must go. The appearance of her old friend the towering mountain-height, up a blue night-sky, compelled her swift mind to see herself far away, yearning to him out of exile, an exile that had no local features; she would not imagine them to give a centre of warmth, her wilful grief preferred the blank. It resembled death in seeming some hollowness behind a shroud, which we shudder at.

The room was lighted by a stable-lantern on a kitchen-table. Their seat near the window was a rickety garden-bench rejected in the headlong sale of the furniture; and when she rose, unable to continue motionless while the hosts of illuminated cloud flew

fast, she had to warn her brother to preserve his balance. He tactily did so, aware of the necessity.

She walked up and down the long seven-windowed saloon, haunted by her footfall, trying to think, chafing at his quietness and acknowledging that he did well to be quiet. They had finished their packing of boxes and of wearing-apparel for the journey. There was nothing to think of, nothing further to talk of, nothing for her to do save to sit and look, and deaden her throbs by counting them. She soon returned to her seat beside her brother, with the marvel in her breast that the house she desired so much to love should be cold and repel her now it was a vacant shell. Her memories could not hang within it anywhere. She shut her eyes to be with the images of the dead, conceiving the method as her brother's happy secret, and imitated his posture, elbows propped on knees to support the chin. His quietness breathed of a deeper love than her own.

Meanwhile the high wind had sunk ; the moon, after pushing her withered half to the zenith, was climbing the dusky edge, revealed fitfully ; threads and wisps of thin vapour travelled along a falling gale, and branched from the dome of the sky in migratory broken lines, like wild birds shifting the order of flight, north and east, where the dawn sat in a web, but as yet had done no more than shoot up a glow along the central heavens, in amid the waves of deepened cloud : a mirror for night to see her dark self in her own hue. A shiver between the silent couple pricked their wits, and she said : 'Chillon, shall we run out and call the morning ?'

It was an old game of theirs, encouraged by their

hearty father, to be out in the early hour on a rise of ground near the house and 'call the morning.' Her brother was glad of the challenge, and upon one of the yawns following a sleepless night, replied with a return to boyishness: 'Yes, if you like. It 's the last time we shall do her the service here. Let 's go.'

They sprang up together and the bench fell behind them. Swinging the lantern he carried inconsiderately, the ring of it was left on his finger, and the end of candle rolled out of the crazy frame to the floor and was extinguished. Chillon had no match-box. He said to her:—

'What do you think of the window?—we 've done it before, Carin. Better than groping down stairs and passages blocked with lumber.'

'I 'm ready,' she said, and caught at her skirts by instinct to prove her readiness on the spot.

A drop of a dozen feet or so from the French window to a flower-bed was not very difficult. Her father had taught her how to jump, besides the how of many other practical things. She leaped as lightly as her brother, never touching earth with her hands; and rising from the proper contraction of the legs in taking the descent, she quoted her father: '*Mean it when you 're doing it.*'

'*For no enemy's shot is equal to a weak heart in the act*,' Chillon pursued the quotation, laying his hand on her shoulder for a sign of approval. She looked up at him.

They passed down the garden and a sloping meadow to a brook swollen by heavy rains; over the brook on a narrow plank, and up a steep and stony pathway,

almost a watercourse, between rocks, to another meadow, level with the house, that led ascending through a firwood; and there the change to thicker darkness told them light was abroad, though whether of the clouded moon or of the first grey of the quiet revolution was uncertain. Metallic light of a subterranean realm, it might have been thought.

'You remember everything of father,' Carinthia said.

'We both do,' said Chillon.

She pressed her brother's arm. 'We will. We will never forget anything.'

Beyond the firwood light was visibly the dawn's. Half-way down the ravines it resembled the light cast off a torrent water. It lay on the grass like a sheet of unreflecting steel, and was a face without a smile above. Their childhood ran along the tracks to the forest by the light, which was neither dim nor cold, but grave; presenting tree and shrub and dwarf growth and grass austerely, not deepening or confusing them. They wound their way by borders of crag, seeing in a dell below the mouth of the idle mine begirt with weedy and shrub-hung rock, a dripping semi-circle. Farther up they came on the flat juniper and crossed a wet ground-thicket of whortleberry: their feet were in the moist moss among sprigs of heath; and a great fir tree stretched his length, a peeled multitude of his dead fellows leaned and stood upright in the midst of scattered fire-stained members, and through their skeleton limbs the sheer precipice of slate-rock of the bulk across the chasm, nursery of hawk and eagle, wore a thin blue tinge, the sign of warmer light abroad.

'This way, my brother!' cried Carinthia, shuddering at a path he was about to follow.

Dawn in the mountain-land is a meeting of many friends. The pinnacle, the forest-head, the latschen-tufted mound, rock-bastion and defiant cliff and giant of the triple peak, were in view, clearly lined for a common recognition, but all were figures of solid gloom, unfeatured and bloomless. Another minute and they had flung off their mail and changed to various, indented, intricate, succinct in ridge, scar and channel; and they had all a look of watchfulness that made them one company. The smell of rock-waters and roots of herb and moss grew keen; air became a wine that raised the breast high to breathe it; an uplifting coolness pervaded the heights. What wonder that the mountain-bred girl should let fly her voice. The natural carol woke an echo. She did not repeat it.

'And we will not forget our home, Chillon,' she said, touching him gently to comfort some saddened feeling.

The plumes of cloud now slowly entered into the lofty arch of dawn and melted from brown to purple-black. The upper sky swam with violet; and in a moment each stray cloud-feather was edged with rose, and then suffused. It seemed that the heights fronted East to eye the interflooding of colours, and it was imaginable that all turned to the giant whose forehead first kindled to the sun: a greeting of god and king.

On the morning of a farewell we fluctuate sharply between the very distant and the close and homely: and even in memory the fluctuation occurs, the grander scene casting us back on the modestly nestling, and that, when it has refreshed us, conjuring imagination to embrace the splendour and wonder. But the wrench of an immediate division from what we love makes the things within reach the dearest, we put out our hands

for them, as violently-parted lovers do, though the soul in days to come would know a craving, and imagination flap a leaden wing, if we had not looked beyond them.

'Shall we go down?' said Carinthia, for she knew a little cascade near the house, showering on rock and fern, and longed to have it round her.

They descended, Chillon saying that they would soon have the mists rising, and must not delay to start on their journey.

The armies of the young sunrise in mountain-lands neighbouring the plains, vast shadows, were marching over woods and meads, black against the edge of golden; and great heights were cut with them, and bounding waters took the leap in a silvery radiance to gloom; the bright and dark-banded valleys were like night and morning taking hands down the sweep of their rivers. Immense was the range of vision scudding the peaks and over the illimitable Eastward plains flat to the very East and sources of the sun.

Carinthia said: 'When I marry I shall come here to live and die.'

Her brother glanced at her. He was fond of her, and personally he liked her face; but such a confident anticipation of marriage on the part of a portionless girl set him thinking of the character of her charms and the attraction they would present to the world of men. They were expressive enough; at times he had thought them marvellous in their clear cut of the animating mind. No one could fancy her handsome; and just now her hair was in some disorder, a night without sleep had an effect on her complexion.

'It 's not usually the wife who decides where to live,' said he.

Her ideas were anywhere but with the dream of a husband. 'Could we stay on another day?'

'My dear girl! Another night on that crazy stool! Besides, Mariandl is bound to go to-day to her new place, and who's to cook for us? Do you propose fasting as well as watching?'

'Could I cook?' she asked him humbly.

'No, you couldn't; not for a starving regiment! Your accomplishments are of a different sort. No, it's better to get over the pain at once, if we can't escape it.'

'That I think too,' said she, 'and we should have to buy provisions. Then, brother, instantly after breakfast. Only, let us walk it. I know the whole way, and it is not more than a two days' walk for you and me. Consent. Driving would be like going gladly. I could never bear to remember that I was driven away. And walking will save money; we are not rich, you tell me, brother.'

'A few florins more or less!' he rejoined, rather frowning. 'You have good Styrian boots, I see. But I want to be over at the Baths there soon; not later than to-morrow.'

'But, brother, if they know we are coming they will wait for us. And we can be there to-morrow night or the next morning!'

He considered it. He wanted exercise and loved this mountain-land; his inclinations melted into hers, though he had reasons for hesitating. 'Well, we'll send on my portmanteau and your boxes in the cart; we'll walk it. You're a capital walker, you're a gallant comrade; I wouldn't wish for a better.' He wondered, as he spoke, whether any true-hearted gentle-

man besides himself would ever think the same of this lonely girl.

Her eyes looked a delighted 'No-really?' for the sweetest on earth to her was to be prized by her brother.

She hastened forward. 'We will go down and have our last meal at home,' she said in the dialect of the country. 'We have five eggs. No meat for you, dear, but enough bread and butter, some honey left, and plenty of coffee. I should like to have left old Mariandl more, but we are unable to do very much for poor people now. Milk, I cannot say. She is just the kind soul to be up and out to fetch us milk for an early first breakfast; but she may have overslept herself.'

Chillon smiled. 'You were right, Janey, about not going to bed last night; we might have missed the morning.'

'I hate sleep: I hate anything that robs me of my will,' she replied.

'You'd be glad of your doses of sleep if you had to work and study.'

'To fall down by the wayside tired out—yes, brother, a dead sleep is good. Then you are in the hands of God. Father used to say, four hours for a man, six for a woman.'

'And four and twenty for a lord,' added Chillon. 'I remember.'

'A lord of that Admiralty,' she appealed to his closer recollection. 'But I mean, brother, dreaming is what I detest so.'

'Don't be detesting, my dear; reserve your strength,' said he. 'I suppose dreams are of some use, now and then.'

'I shall never think them useful.'

'When we can't get what we want, my good Carin.'

'Then we should not waste ourselves in dreams.'

'They promise falsely sometimes. That 's no reason why we should reject the consolation when we can't get what we want, my little sister.'

'I would not be denied.'

'There 's the impossible.'

'Not for you, brother.'

Perhaps a half-minute after she had spoken, he said, pursuing a dialogue within himself aloud rather than revealing a secret: 'You don't know her position.'

Carinthia's heart stopped beating. Who was this person suddenly conjured up?

She fancied she might not have heard correctly; she feared to ask: and yet she perceived a novel softness in him that would have answered. Pain of an unknown kind made her love of her brother conscious that if she asked she would suffer greater pain.

The house was in sight, a long white building with blinds down at some of the windows, and some wide open, some showing unclean glass: the three aspects and signs of a house's emptiness when they are seen together.

Carinthia remarked on their having met nobody. It had a serious meaning for them. Formerly they were proud of outstripping the busy population of the mine, coming down on them with wild wavings and shouts at sunrise. They felt the death again, a whole field laid low by one stroke, and wintriness in the season of glad life. A wind had blown and all had vanished.

The second green of the year shot lively sparkles off the meadows, from a fringe of coloured globelets to a

warm silver lake of dews. The firwood was already breathing rich and sweet in the sun. The half-moon fell rayless and paler than the fan of fleeces pushed up Westward, high overhead, themselves dispersing on the blue in downy feathers, like the mottled grey of an eagle's breast: the smaller of them bluish, like traces of the beaked wood-pigeon.

She looked above, then below on the slim and straight-grown flocks of naked purple crocuses in bud and blow abounding over the meadow that rolled to the level of the house, and two of these she gathered.

CHAPTER V

A MOUNTAIN WALK IN MIST AND SUNSHINE

Chillon was right in his forecast of the mists. An over-moistened earth steaming to the sun obscured it before the two had finished breakfast, which was a finish to everything eatable in the ravaged dwelling, with the exception of a sly store for the midday meal, that old Mariandl had stuffed into Chillon's leather sack—the fruit of secret begging on their behalf about the neighbourhood. He found the sack heavy and bulky as he slung it over his shoulders; but she bade him make nothing of such a trifle till he had it inside him. 'And you that love tea so, my pretty one, so that you always laughed and sang after drinking a cup with your mother,' she said to Carinthia, 'you will find one pinch of it in your bag at the end of the left-foot slipper, to remember your home by when you are out in the world.'

She crossed the strap of the bag on her mistress's bosom, and was embraced by Carinthia and Chillon in turns, Carinthia telling her to dry her eyes, for that she would certainly come back and perhaps occupy the house one day or other. The old soul moaned of eyes that would not be awake to behold her; she begged a visit at her grave, though it was to be in a Catholic burial-place and the priests had used her dear master and mistress ill, not allowing them to lie in consecrated ground; affection made her a champion of religious tolerance and a little afraid of retribution. Carinthia soothed her, kissed her, gave the promise, and the parting was over.

She and Chillon had on the previous day accomplished a pilgrimage to the resting-place of their father and mother among humble Protestants, iron-smelters, in a valley out of the way of their present line of march to the glacier of the great snow-mountain marking the junction of three Alpine provinces of Austria. Josef, the cart-driver with the boxes, who was to pass the valley, vowed of his own accord to hang a fresh day's wreath on the rails. He would not hear of money for the purchase, and they humoured him. The family had been beloved. There was an offer of a home for Carinthia in the castle of Count Lebern, a friend of her parents, much taken with her, and she would have accepted it had not Chillon overruled her choice, determined that, as she was English, she must come to England and live under the guardianship of her uncle, Lord Levellier, of whose character he did not speak.

The girl's cheeks were drawn thin and her lips shut as they departed; she was tearless. A phantom ring of mist accompanied her from her first footing outside

the house. She did not look back. The house came swimming and plunging after her, like a spectral ship on big seas, and her father and mother lived and died in her breast; and now they were strong, consulting, chatting, laughing, caressing; now still and white, caught by a vapour that dived away with them either to right or left, but always with the same suddenness, leaving her to question herself whether she existed, for more of life seemed to be with their mystery than with her speculations. The phantom ring of mist enclosing for miles the invariable low-sweeping dark spruce-fir kept her thoughts on them as close as the shroud. She walked fast, but scarcely felt that she was moving. Near midday the haunted circle widened; rocks were loosely folded in it, and heads of trees, whose round intervolving roots grasped the yellow roadside soil; the mists shook like a curtain, and partly opened and displayed a tapestry-landscape, roughly worked, of woollen crag and castle and suggested glen, threaded waters, very prominent foreground, Autumn flowers on banks; a predominant atmospheric greyness. The sun threw a shaft, liquid instead of burning, as we see his beams beneath a wave; and then the mists narrowed again, boiled up the valleys and streams above the mountain, curled and flew, and were Python coils pierced by brighter arrows of the sun. A spot of blue signalled his victory above.

To look at it was to fancy they had been walking under water and had now risen to the surface. Carinthia's mind stepped out of the chamber of death. The different air and scene breathed into her a timid warmth toward the future, and between her naming of the lesser mountains on their side of the pass, she

asked questions relating to England, and especially the ladies she was to see at the Baths beyond the glacier-pass. She had heard of a party of his friends awaiting him there, without much encouragement from him to ask particulars of them, and she had hitherto abstained, as she was rather shy of meeting her countrywomen. The ladies, Chillon said, were cousins; one was a young widow, the Countess of Fleetwood, and the other was Miss Fakenham, a younger lady.

Carinthia murmured in German: 'Poor soul!' Which one was she pitying? The widow, she said, in the tone implying, naturally.

Her brother assured her the widow was used to it, for this was her second widowhood.

'She marries again!' exclaimed the girl.

'You don't like that idea?' said he.

Carinthia betrayed a delicate shudder.

Her brother laughed to himself at her expressive present tense. 'And marries again!' he said. 'There will certainly be a third.'

'Husband?' said she, as at the incredible.

'Husband, let's hope,' he answered.

She dropped from her contemplation of the lady, and her look at her brother signified: It will not be you!

Chillon was engaged in spying for a place where he could spread out the contents of his bag. Sharp hunger beset them both at the mention of eating. A bank of sloping green shaded by a chestnut proposed the seat, and here he relieved the bag of a bottle of wine, slices of meat, bread, hard eggs, and lettuce, a chipped cup to fling away after drinking the wine, and a supply of small butter-cakes known to be favourites with Carinthia. She reversed the order of the feast

by commencing upon one of the cakes, to do honour to Mariandl's thoughtfulness. As at their breakfast, they shared the last morsel.

'But we would have made it enough for our dear old dog Pluto as well, if he had lived,' said Carinthia, sighing with her thankfulness and compassionate regrets, a mixture often inspiring a tender babbling melancholy. 'Dogs' eyes have such a sick look of love. He might have lived longer, though he was very old, only he could not survive the loss of father. I know the finding of the body broke his heart. He sprang forward, he stopped and threw up his head. It was human language to hear him, Chillon. He lay in the yard, trying to lift his eyes when I came to him, they were so heavy; and he had not strength to move his poor old tail more than once. He died with his head on my lap. He seemed to beg me, and I took him, and he breathed twice, and that was his end. Pluto! old dog! Well, for you or for me, brother, we could not have a better wish. As for me, death! . . . When we know we are to die! Only let my darling live! that is my prayer, and that we two may not be separated till I am taken to their grave. Father bought ground for four—his wife and himself and his two children. It does not oblige us to be buried there, but could we have any other desire?'

She stretched her hand to her brother. He kissed it spiritedly.

'Look ahead, my dear girl. Help me to finish this wine. There's nothing like good hard walking to give common wine of the country a flavour—and out of broken crockery.'

'I think it so good,' Carinthia replied, after drinking

from the cup. 'In England they do not grow wine. Are the people there kind?'

'They're civilized people, of course.'

'Kind—warm to you, Chillon?'

'Some of them, when you know them. "Warm," is hardly the word. Winter's warm on skates. You must do a great deal for yourself. They don't boil over. By the way, don't expect much of your uncle.'

'Will he not love me?'

'He gives you a lodging in his house, and food—enough, we'll hope. You won't see company or much of him.'

'I cannot exist without being loved. I do not care for company. He must love me a little.'

'He is one of the warm-hearted race—he's mother's brother; but where his heart is, I've not discovered. Bear with him just for the present, my dear, till I am able to support you.'

'I will,' she said.

The dreary vision of a home with an unloving uncle was not brightened by the alternative of her brother's having to support her. She spoke of money. 'Have we none, Chillon?'

'We have no debts,' he answered. 'We have a claim on the Government here for indemnification for property taken to build a fortress upon one of the passes into Italy. Father bought the land, thinking there would be a yield of ore thereabout; and they have seized it, rightly enough, but they dispute our claim for the valuation we put on it. A small sum they would consent to pay. It would be a very small sum, and I'm my father's son, I will have justice.'

'Yes!' Carinthia joined with him to show the same stout nature.

'We have nothing else except a bit to toss up for luck.'

'And how can I help being a burden on my brother?' she inquired, in distress.

'Marry, and be a blessing to a husband,' he said lightly.

They performed a sacrifice of the empty bottle and cracked cup on the site of their meal, as if it had been a ceremony demanded from travellers, and, leaving them in fragments, proceeded on their journey refreshed.

Walking was now high enjoyment, notwithstanding the force of the sun, for they were a hardy couple, requiring no more than sufficient nourishment to combat the elements with an exulting blood. Besides they loved mountain air and scenery, and each step to the ridge of the pass they climbed was an advance in splendour. Peaks of ashen hue and pale dry red and pale sulphur pushed up, straight, forked, twisted, naked, striking their minds with an indeterminate ghostliness of Indian, so strange they were in shape and colouring. These sharp points were the first to greet them between the blue and green. A depression of the pass to the left gave sight of the points of black fir forest below, round the girths of the barren shafts. Mountain blocks appeared pushing up in front, and a mountain wall and woods on it, and mountains in the distance, and cliffs riven with falls of water that were silver skeins, down lower to meadows, villages and spires, and lower finally to the whole valley of the foaming river, field and river seeming in imagination rolled out from the hand of the heading mountain.

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'But see this in winter, as I did with father, Chillon!' said Carinthia.

She said it upon love's instinct to halo the scene with something beyond present vision, and to sanctify it for her brother, so that this walk of theirs together should never be forgotten.

A smooth fold of cloud, moveless along one of the upper pastures, and still dense enough to be luminous in sunlight, was the last of the mist.

They watched it lying in the form of a fish, leviathan diminished, as they descended their path; and the head was lost, the tail spread peacockwise, and evaporated slowly in that likeness; and soft to a breath of air as gossamer down, the body became a ball, a cock, a little lizard, nothingness.

The bluest bright day of the year was shining. Chillon led the descent. With his trim and handsome figure before her, Carinthia remembered the current saying, that he should have been the girl and she the boy. That was because he resembled their mother in face. But the build of his limbs and shoulders was not feminine. To her admiring eyes, he had a look superior to simple strength and grace; the look of a great sky-bird about to mount, a fountain-like energy of stature, delightful to her contemplation. And he had the mouth women put faith in for decision and fixedness. She did, most fully; and reflecting how entirely she did so, the thought assailed her: some one must be loving him!

She allowed it to surprise her, not choosing to revert to an uneasy sensation of the morning.

That some one, her process of reasoning informed her, was necessarily an English young lady. She reserved

her questions till they should cease this hopping and heeling down the zigzag of the slippery path-track. When children they had been collectors of beetles and butterflies, and the flying by of a 'royal-mantle,' the purple butterfly grandly fringed, could still remind Carinthia of the event it was of old to spy and chase one. Chillon himself was not above the sentiment of their very early days; he stopped to ask if she had seen that lustrous blue-wing, a rarer species, prized by youngsters, shoot through the chestnut trees: and they both paused for a moment, gazing into the fairyland of infancy, she seeing with her brother's eyes, this prince of the realm having escaped her. He owned he might have been mistaken, as the brilliant fellow flew swift and high between leaves, like an ordinary fritillary. Not the less did they get their glimpse of the wonders in the sunny eternity of a child's afternoon.

'An Auerhahn, Chillon!' she said, picturing the maturer day when she had scaled perilous heights with him at night to stalk the blackcock in the prime of the morning. She wished they could have had another such adventure to stamp the old home on his heart freshly, to the exclusion of beautiful English faces.

On the level of the valley, where they met the torrent-river, walking side by side with him, she ventured an inquiry: 'English girls are fair girls, are they not?'

'There are some dark also,' he replied.

'But the best-looking are fair?'

'Perhaps they are, with us.'

'Mother was fair.'

'She was.'

'I have only seen a few of them, once at Vienna, and at Venice, and those Baths we are going to; and at Meran, I think.'

'You considered them charming?'

'Not all.'

It was touching that she should be such a stranger to her countrywomen! He drew a portrait-case from his breast-pocket, pressing the spring, and handed it to her, saying: 'There is one.' He spoke indifferently, but as soon as she had seen the face inside it, with a look at him and a deep breath, she understood that he was an altered brother, and that they were three instead of two.

She handed it back to him, saying hushedly and only: 'Yes.'

He did not ask an opinion upon the beauty she had seen. His pace increased, and she hastened her steps beside him. She had not much to learn when some minutes later she said: 'Shall I see her, Chillon?'

'She is one of the ladies we are to meet.'

'What a pity!' Carinthia stepped faster, enlightened as to his wish to get to the Baths without delay; and her heart softened in reflecting how readily he had yielded to her silly preference for going on foot.

Her cry of regret was equivocal; it produced no impression on him. They reached a village where her leader deemed it advisable to drive for the remainder of the distance up the valley to the barrier snow-mountain. She assented instantly; she had no longer any active wishes of her own, save to make amends to her brother, who was and would ever be her brother: she could not be robbed of their relationship.

Something undefined in her feeling of possession she had been robbed of, she knew it by her spiritlessness;

and she would fain have attributed it to the idle motion of the car, now and then stupidly jolting her on, after the valiant exercise of her limbs. They were in a land of waterfalls and busy mills, a narrowing vale where the runs of grass grew short and wild, and the glacier-river roared for the leap, more foam than water, and the savagery, naturally exciting to her, breathed of its lair among the rocks and ice-fields.

Her brother said: 'There he is.' She saw the white-crowned king of the region, of whose near presence to her old home she had been accustomed to think proudly, and she looked at him without springing to him, and continued imaging her English home and her loveless uncle, merely admiring the scene, as if the fire of her soul had been extinguished.—'Marry, and be a blessing to a husband.' Chillon's words whispered of the means of escape from the den of her uncle.

But who would marry me! she thought. An unreproved sensation of melting pervaded her; she knew her capacity for gratitude, and conjuring it up in her heart, there came with it the noble knightly gentleman who would really stoop to take a plain girl by the hand, release her, and say: 'Be mine!' His vizor was down, of course. She had no power of imagining the lineaments of that prodigy. Or was he a dream? He came and went. Her mother, not unkindly, sadly, had counted her poor girl's chances of winning attention and a husband. Her father had doted on her face; but, as she argued, her father had been attracted by her mother, a beautiful woman, and this was a circumstance that reflected the greater hopelessness on her prospects. She bore a likeness to her father, little to her mother, though he fancied the reverse and gave

her the mother's lips and hair. Thinking of herself, however, was destructive to the form of her mirror of knightliness: he wavered, he fled for good, as the rosy vapour born of our sensibility must do when we relapse to coldness, and the more completely when we try to command it. No, she thought, a plain girl should think of work, to earn her independence.

'Women are not permitted to follow armies, Chillon?' she said.

He laughed out. 'What's in your head?'

The laugh abashed her; she murmured of women being good nurses for wounded soldiers, if they were good walkers to march with the army; and, as evidently it sounded witless to him, she added, to seem reasonable: 'You have not told me the Christian names of those ladies.'

He made queer eyes over the puzzle to connect the foregoing and the succeeding in her remarks, but answered straightforwardly: 'Livia is one, and Henrietta.'

Her ear seized on the stress of his voice. 'Henrietta!' She chose that name for the name of the person disturbing her; it fused best, she thought, with the new element she had been compelled to take into her system, to absorb it if she could.

'You're not scheming to have them serve as army hospital nurses, my dear?'

'No, Chillon.'

'You can't explain it, I suppose.'

'A sister could go too, when you go to war, Chillon.'

A sister could go, if it were permitted by the authorities, and be near her brother to nurse him in case of wounds; others would be unable to claim the privi-

lege. That was her meaning, involved with the hazy project of earning an independence; but she could not explain it, and Chillon set her down for one of the inexplicable sex, which the simple adventurous girl had not previously seemed to be.

She was inwardly warned of having talked foolishly, and she held her tongue. Her humble and modest jealousy, scarce deserving the title, passed with a sigh or two. It was her first taste of life in the world.

A fit of heavy-mindedness ensued, that heightened the contrast her recent mood had bequeathed, between herself, ignorant as she was, and those ladies. Their names, Livia and Henrietta, soared above her and sang the music of the splendid spheres. Henrietta was closer to earth, for her features had been revealed; she was therefore the dearer, and the richer for him who loved her, being one of us, though an over-earthly one; and Carinthia gave her to Chillon, reserving for herself a handmaiden's place within the circle of their happiness.

This done, she sat straight in the car. It was toiling up the steep ascent of a glen to the mountain village, the last of her native province. Her proposal to walk was accepted, and the speeding of her blood, now that she had mastered the new element in it, soon restored her to her sisterly affinity with natural glories. The sunset was on yonder side of the snows. Here there was a feast of variously-tinted sunset shadows on snow, meadows, rock, river, serrated cliff. The peaked cap of the rushing rock-dotted sweeps of upward snow caught a scarlet illumination: one flank of the white in heaven was violetted wonderfully.

At nightfall, under a clear black sky, alive with

wakeful fires round head and breast of the great Alp, Chillon and Carinthia strolled out of the village, and he told her some of his hopes. They referred to inventions of destructive weapons, which were primarily to place his country out of all danger from a world in arms; and also, it might be mentioned, to bring him fortune. 'For I must have money!' he said, sighing it out like a deliberate oath. He and his uncle were associated in the inventions. They had an improved rocket that would force military chiefs to change their tactics: they had a new powder, a rifle, a model musket —the latter based on his own plans; and a scheme for fortress artillery likely to turn the preponderance in favour of the defensive once again. 'And that will be really doing good,' said Chillon, 'for where it's with the offensive, there's everlasting bullying and plundering.'

Carinthia warmly agreed with him, but begged him be sure his uncle divided the profits equally. She discerned what his need of money signified.

Tenderness urged her to say: 'Henrietta! Chillon.'

'Well?' he answered quickly.

'Will she wait?'

'Can she, you should ask.'

'Is she brave?'

'Who can tell, till she has been tried?'

'Is she quite free?'

'She has not yet been captured.'

'Brother, is there no one else? . . .'

'There's a nobleman anxious to bestow his titles on her.'

'He is rich?'

'The first or second wealthiest in Great Britain, they say.'

'Is he young?'

'About the same age as mine.'

'Is he a handsome young man?'

'Handsomer than your brother, my girl.'

'No, no, no!' said she. 'And what if he is, and your Henrietta does not choose him? Now let me think what I long to think. I have her close to me.'

She rocked a roseate image on her heart and went to bed with it by starlight.

By starlight they sprang to their feet and departed the next morning, in the steps of a guide carrying, Chillon said, 'a better lantern than we left behind us at the smithy.'

'Father!' exclaimed Carinthia on her swift inward breath, for this one of the names he had used to give to her old home revived him to her thoughts and senses fervently.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHER

Three parts down a swift decline of shattered slate, where travelling stones loosened from rows of scree hurl away at a bound after one roll over, there sat a youth dusty and torn, nursing a bruised leg, not in the easiest of postures, on a sharp tooth of rock, that might at any moment have broken from the slanting slab at the end of which it formed a stump, and added him a second time to the general crumble of the mountain. He had done a portion of the descent in

excellent imitation of the detached fragments, and had parted company with his alpenstock and plaid; preserving his hat and his knapsack. He was alone, disabled, and cheerful; in doubt of the arrival of succour before he could trust his left leg to do him further service unaided; but it was morning still, the sun was hot, the air was cool; just the tempering opposition to render existence pleasant as a piece of vegetation, especially when there has been a question of your ceasing to exist; and the view was of a sustaining sublimity of desolateness: crag and snow overhead; a gloomy vale below; no life either of bird or herd; a voiceless region where there had once been roars at the bowling of a hill from a mountain to the deep, and the third flank of the mountain spoke of it in the silence.

He would have enjoyed the scene unremittingly, like the philosopher he pretended to be, in a disdain of civilization and the ambitions of men, had not a contest with earth been forced on him from time to time to keep the heel of his right foot, dug in shallow shale, fixed and supporting. As long as it held he was happy and maintained the attitude of a guitar-player, thrumming the calf of the useless leg to accompany tuneful thoughts, but the inevitable lapse and slide of the foot recurred, and the philosopher was exhibited as an infant learning to crawl. The seat, moreover, not having been fashioned for him or for any soft purpose, resisted his pressure and became a thing of violence, that required to be humiliatingly coaxed. His last resource to propitiate it was counselled by nature turned mathematician: tenacious extension solved the problem; he lay back at his length, and with his hat over his eyes con-

sented to see nothing for the sake of comfort. Thus he was perfectly rational, though when others beheld him he appeared the insanest of mortals.

A girl's voice gave out the mountain carol ringingly above. His heart and all his fancies were in motion at the sound. He leaned on an elbow to listen; the slide threatened him, and he resumed his full stretch, determined to take her for a dream. He was of the class of youths who, in apprehension that their bright season may not be permanent, choose to fortify it by a systematic contempt of material realities unless they come in the fairest of shapes, and as he was quite sincere in this feeling and election of the right way to live, disappointment and sullenness overcame him on hearing men's shouts and steps; despite his helpless condition he refused to stir, for they had jarred on his dream. Perhaps his temper, unknown to himself, had been a little injured by his mishap, and he would not have been sorry to charge them with want of common humanity in passing him; or he did not think his plight so bad, else he would have bawled after them had they gone by: for the youths of his description are fools only upon system, however earnestly they indulge the present self-punishing sentiment. The party did not pass; they stopped short, they consulted, and a feminine tongue more urgent than the others, and very musical, sweet to hear anywhere, put him in tune. She said, 'Brother! brother!' in German. Our philosopher flung off his hat.

'You see!' said the lady's brother.

'Ask him, Anton,' she said to their guide.

'And quick!' her brother added.

The guide scrambled along to him, and at a closer

glance shouted: 'The Englishman!' wheeling his finger to indicate what had happened to the Tomnoddy islander.

His master called to know if there were broken bones, as if he could stop for nothing else.

The cripple was raised. The gentleman and lady made their way to him, and he tried his hardest to keep from tottering on the slope in her presence. No injury had been done to the leg; there was only a stiffness, and an idiotic doubling of the knee, as though at each step his leg pronounced a dogged negative to the act of walking. He said something equivalent to 'this donkey leg,' to divert her charitable eyes from a countenance dancing with ugly twitches. She was the Samaritan. A sufferer discerns his friend, though it be not the one who physically assists him: he is inclined by nature to put material aid at a lower mark than gentleness, and her brief words of encouragement, the tone of their delivery yet more, were medical to his blood, better help than her brother's iron arm, he really believed. Her brother and the guide held him on each side, and she led to pick out the safer footing for him; she looked round and pointed to some projection that would form a step; she drew attention to views here and there, to win excuses for his resting; she did not omit to soften her brother's visible impatience as well, and this was the art which affected her keenly sensible debtor most.

'I suppose I ought to have taken a guide,' he said.

'There 's not a doubt of that,' said Chillon Kirby.

Carinthia halted, leaning on her staff: 'But I had the same wish. They told us at the inn of an Englishman who left last night to sleep on the mountain, and

would go alone; and did I not say, brother, that must be true love of the mountains?'

'These freaks get us a bad name on the Continent,' her brother replied. He had no sympathy with nonsense, and naturally not with a youth who smelt of being a dreamy romancer and had caused the name of Englishman to be shouted in his ear in derision. And the fellow might delay his arrival at the Baths and sight of the lady of his love for hours!

They managed to get him hobbling and slipping to the first green tufts of the base, where long black tongues of slate-rubble pouring into the grass, like shore-waves that have spent their burden, seem about to draw back to bring the mountain down. Thence to the level pasture was but a few skips performed sliding.

'Well, now,' said Chillon, 'you can stand?'

'Pretty well, I think.' He tried his foot on the ground, and then stretched his length, saying that it only wanted rest. Anton pressed a hand at his ankle and made him wince, but the bones were sound, leg and hip not worse than badly bruised. He was advised by Anton to plant his foot in the first running water he came to, and he was considerate enough to say to Chillon:—

'Now you can leave me; and let me thank you. Half an hour will set me right. My name is Woodseer, if ever we meet again.'

Chillon nodded a hurried good-bye, without a thought of giving his name in return. But Carinthia had thrown herself on the grass. Her brother asked her in dismay if she was tired. She murmured to him: 'I should like to hear more English.'

'My dear girl, you'll have enough of it in two or three weeks.'

'Should we leave a good deed half done, Chillon?'

'He shall have our guide.'

'He may not be rich.'

'I'll pay Anton to stick to him.'

'Brother, he has an objection to guides.'

Chillon cast hungry eyes on his watch: 'Five minutes, then.' He addressed Mr. Woodseer, who was reposing, indifferent to time, hard-by: 'Your objection to guides might have taught you a sharp lesson. It's like declining to have a master in studying a science—trusting to instinct for your knowledge of a bargain. One might as well refuse an oar to row in a boat.'

'I'd rather risk it,' the young man replied. 'These guides kick the soul out of scenery. I came for that and not for them.'

'You might easily have been a disagreeable part of the scene.'

'Why not here as well as elsewhere?'

'You don't care for your life?'

'I try not to care for it a fraction more than Destiny does.'

'Fatalism. I suppose you care for something?'

'Besides I've a slack purse, and shun guides and inns when I can. I care for open air, colour, flowers, weeds, birds, insects, mountains. There's a world behind the mask. I call this life; and the town's a boiling pot, intolerably stuffy. My one ambition is to be out of it. I thank heaven I have not another on earth. Yes, I care for my note-book, because it's of no use to a human being except me. I slept beside a spring last night, and I never shall like a bedroom so well. I think I have

discovered the great secret: I may be wrong, of course.' And if so, he had his philosophy, the admission was meant to say.

Carinthia expected the revelation of a notable secret, but none came; or if it did it eluded her grasp:—he was praising contemplation, he was praising tobacco. He talked of the charm of poverty upon a settled income of a very small sum of money, the fruit of a compact he would execute with the town to agree to his perpetual exclusion from it, and to retain his identity, and not be the composite which every townsman was. He talked of Buddha. He said: 'Here the brook 's the brook, the mountain 's the mountain: they are as they always were.'

'You 'd have men be the same,' Chillon remarked, as to a nursling prattler, and he rejoined: 'They 've lost more than they 've gained; though,' he admitted, 'there has been some gain, in a certain way.'

Fortunately for them, young men have not the habit of reflecting upon the indigestion of ideas they receive from members of their community, sometimes upon exchange. They compare a view of life with their own view, to condemn it summarily; and he was a curious object to Chillon as the perfect opposite of himself.

'I would advise you,' Chillon said, 'to get a pair of Styrian boots, if you intend to stay in the Alps. Those boots of yours are London make.'

'They 're my father's make,' said Mr. Woodseer.

Chillon drew out his watch. 'Come, Carinthia, we must be off.' He proposed his guide, and, as Anton was rejected, he pointed the route over the head of the valley, stated the distance to an inn that way, saluted and strode.

Mr. Woodseer, partly rising, presumed, in raising his hat and thanking Carinthia, to touch her fingers. She smiled on him, frankly extending her open hand, and pointing the route again, counselling him to rest at the inn, even saying: 'You have not yet your strength to come on with us?'

He thought he would stay some time longer: he had a disposition to smoke.

She tripped away to her brother and was watched through the whiffs of a pipe far up the valley, guiltless of any consciousness of producing an impression. But her mind was with the stranger sufficiently to cause her to say to Chillon, at the close of a dispute between him and Anton on the interesting subject of the growth of the horns of chamois: 'Have we been quite kind to that gentleman?'

Chillon looked over his shoulder. 'He 's there still; he 's fond of solitude. And, Carin, my dear, don't give your hand when you are meeting or parting with people: it 's not done.'

His uninstructed sister said: 'Did you not like him?'

She was answered with an 'Oh,' the tone of which balanced lightly on the neutral line. 'Some of the ideas he has are Lord Fleetwood's, I hear, and one can understand them in a man of enormous wealth, who doesn't know what to do with himself and is dead-sick of flattery; though it seems odd for an English nobleman to be raving about Nature. Perhaps it 's because none else of them does.'

'Lord Fleetwood loves our mountains, Chillon?'

'But a fellow who probably has to make his way in the world!—and he despises ambition!' . . . Chillon

dropped him. He was antipathetic to eccentrics, and his soldierly and social training opposed the profession of heterodox ideas: to have listened seriously to them coming from the mouth of an unambitious bootmaker's son involved him in the absurdity. He considered that there was no harm in the lad, rather a commendable sort of courage and some notion of manners; allowing for his ignorance of the convenable in putting out his hand to take a young lady's, with the plea of thanking her. He hoped she would be more on her guard.

Carinthia was sure she had the name of the nobleman wishing to bestow his title upon the beautiful Henrietta. Lord Fleetwood! That slender thread given her of the character of her brother's rival who loved the mountains was woven in her mind with her passing experience of the youth they had left behind them, until the two became one, a highly transfigured one, and the mountain scenery made him very threatening to her brother. A silky-haired youth, brown-eyed, unconquerable in adversity, immensely rich, fond of solitude, curled, decorated, bejewelled by all the elves and gnomes of inmost solitude, must have marvellous attractions, she feared. She thought of him so much, that her humble spirit conceived the stricken soul of the woman as of necessity the pursuer; as shamelessly, though timidly, as she herself pursued in imagination the enchanted secret of the mountain-land. She hoped her brother would not supplicate, for it struck her that the lover who besieged the lady would forfeit her roaming and hunting fancy.

'I wonder what that gentleman is doing now,' she said to Chillon.

He grimaced slightly, for her sake; he would have

liked to inform her, for the sake of educating her in the customs of the world she was going to enter, that the word 'gentleman' conveys in English a special signification.

Her expression of wonder whether they were to meet him again gave Chillon the opportunity of saying: 'It's the unlikeliest thing possible—at all events in England.'

'But I think we shall,' said she.

'My dear, you meet people of your own class; you don't meet others.'

'But we may meet anybody, Chillon!'

'In the street. I suppose you would not stop to speak to him in the street.'

'It would be strange to see him in the street!' Carinthia said.

'Strange or not!' . . . Chillon thought he had said sufficient. She was under his protectorship, otherwise he would not have alluded to the observance of class distinctions. He felt them personally in this case because of their seeming to stretch grotesquely by the pretentious heterodoxy of the young fellow, whom, nevertheless, thinking him over now that he was mentioned, he approved for his manliness in bluntly telling his origin and status.

A chalet supplied them with fresh milk, and the inn of a village on a perch with the midday meal. Their appetites were princely and swept over the little inn like a conflagration. Only after clearing it did they remember the rearward pedestrian, whose probable wants Chillon was urged by Carinthia to speak of to their host. They pushed on, clambering up, scurrying down, tramping gaily, till by degrees the chambers of

Carinthia's imagination closed their doors and would no longer intercommunicate. Her head refused to interest her, and left all activity to her legs and her eyes, and the latter became unobservant, except of foot-tracks, animal-like. She felt that she was a fine machine, and nothing else: and she was rapidly approaching those ladies!

'You will tell them how I walked with you,' she said.

'Your friends over yonder?' said he.

'So that they may not think me so ignorant, brother.' She stumbled on the helpless word in a hasty effort to cloak her vanity.

He laughed. Her desire to meet the critical English ladies with a towering reputation in one department of human enterprise was comprehensible, considering the natural apprehensiveness of the half-wild girl before such a meeting. As it often happens with the silly phrases of simple people, the wrong word, foolish although it was, went to the heart of the hearer and threw a more charitable light than ridicule on her. So that they may know I can do something they cannot do, was the interpretation. It showed her deep knowledge of her poorness in laying bare the fact.

Anxious to cheer her, he said: 'Come, come, you can dance. You dance well, mother has told me, and she was a judge. You ride, you swim, you have a voice—for country songs, at all events. And you 're a bit of a botanist too. You 're good at English and German; you had a French governess for a couple of years. By the way, you understand the use of a walking-stick in self-defence: you could handle a sword on occasion.'

'Father trained me,' said Carinthia. 'I can fire a pistol, aiming.'

'With a good aim, too. Father told me you could. How fond he was of his girl! Well, bear in mind that father was proud of you, and hold up your head wherever you are.'

'I will,' she said.

He assured her he had a mind to have a bugle blown at the entrance of the Baths for a challenge to the bathers to match her in warlike accomplishments.

She bit her lips: she could not bear much rallying on the subject just then.

'Which is the hard one to please?' she asked.

'The one you will find the kinder of the two.'

'Henrietta?'

He nodded.

'Has she a father?'

'A gallant old admiral: Admiral Baldwin Fakenham.'

'I am glad of that!' Carinthia sighed out heartily. 'And he is with her? And likes you, Chillon?'

'On the whole, I think he does.'

'A brave officer!' Such a father would be sure to like him.

So the domestic prospect was hopeful.

At sunset they stood on the hills overlooking the basin of the Baths, all enfolded in swathes of pink and crimson up to the shining grey of a high heaven that had the fresh brightness of the morning.

'We are not tired in the slightest,' said Carinthia, trifling with the vision of a cushioned rest below. 'I could go on through the night quite comfortably.'

'Wait till you wake up in your little bed to-morrow,' Chillon replied stoutly, to drive a chill from his lover's heart, that had seized it at the bare suggestion of their going on.

CHAPTER VII

THE LADY'S LETTER

Is not the lover a prophet? He that fervently desires may well be one; his hurried nature is alive with warmth to break the possible blow: and if his fears were not needed they were shadows; and if fulfilled, was he not convinced of his misfortune by a dark anticipation that rarely erred? Descending the hills, he remembered several omens: the sun had sunk when he looked down on the villas and clustered houses, not an edge of the orb had been seen; the admiral's quarters in the broad-faced hotel had worn an appearance resembling the empty house of yesterday; the encounter with the fellow on the rocks had a bad whisper of impish tripping. And what moved Carinthia to speak of going on?

A letter was handed to Chillon in the hall of the admiral's hotel, where his baggage had already been delivered. The manager was deploring the circumstance that his rooms were full to the roof, when Chillon said: 'Well, we must wash and eat'; and Carinthia, from watching her brother's forehead during his perusal of the letter, declared her readiness for anything. He gave her the letter to read by herself while preparing to sit at table, unwilling to ask her for a further tax on her energies—but it was she who had spoken of going on! He thought of it as of a debt she had contracted and might be supposed to think payable to their misfortune.

She read off the first two sentences.

'We can have a carriage here, Chillon; order a carriage; I shall get as much sleep in a carriage as in a bed; I shall enjoy driving at night,' she said immediately, and strongly urged it and forced him to yield, the manager observing that a carriage could be had.

In the privacy of her room, admiring the clear flowing hand, she read the words, delicious in their strangeness to her, notwithstanding the heavy news, as though they were sung out of a night-sky:—

'Most picturesque of Castles!

May none these marks efface,
For they appeal from Tyranny . . .'

'We start at noon to-day. Sailing orders have been issued, and I could only have resisted them in my own person by casting myself overboard. I go like the boat behind the vessel. You were expected yesterday, at latest this morning. I have seen boxes in the hall, with a name on them not foreign to me. Why does the master tarry? Sir, of your valiance you should have held to your good vow, quoth the damozel, for now you see me sore perplexed and that you did not your devoir is my affliction. Where lingers chivalry, she should have proceeded, if not with my knight? I feast on your regrets. I would not have you less than miserable: and I fear the reason is, that I am not so very, very sure you will be so at all or very hugely, as I would command it of you for just time enough to see that change over your eyebrows I know so well.

'If you had seen a certain Henrietta yesterday you would have the picture of how you ought to look. The admiral was heard welcoming a new arrival—you can

hear him. She ran down the stairs quicker than any cascade of this district, she would have made a bet with Livia that it could be no one else—her hand was out—before she was aware of the difference it was locked in Lord F.'s!

'Let the guilty absent suffer for causing such a betrayal of disappointment. I must be avenged! But if indeed you are unhappy and would like to chide the innocent, I am full of compassion for the poor gentleman inheriting my legitimate feelings of wrath, and beg merely that he will not pour them out on me with pen and paper, but from his lips and eyes.

'Time pressing, I chatter no more. The destination is Livia's beloved Baden. We rest a night in the city of Mozart, a night at Munich, a night at Stuttgart. Baden will detain my cousin full a week. She has Captain Abrane and Sir Meeson Corby in attendance—her long shadow and her short: both devoted to Lord F., to win her smile, and how he drives them! The captain has been paraded on the promenade, to the stupefaction of the foreigner. Princes, counts, generals, diplomats passed under him in awe. I am told that he is called St. Christopher.

'Why do we go thus hastily?—my friend, this letter has to be concealed. I know some one who sees in the dark.

'Think no harm of Livia. She is bent upon my worldly advantage, and that is plain even to the person rejecting it. How much more so must it be to papa, though he likes you, and when you are near him would perhaps, in a fit of unworldliness, be almost as reckless as the creature he calls madcap and would rather call countess. No! sooner with a Will-o'-the-wisp, my

friend. Who could ever know where the man was when he himself never knows where he is. He is the wind that bloweth as it listeth—because it is without an aim or always with a new one. And am I the one to direct him? I need direction. My lord and sovereign must fix my mind. I am volatile, earthly, not to be trusted if I do not worship. He himself said to me that—he reads our characters. 'Nothing but a proved hero will satisfy Henrietta,' his words! And the hero must be shining like a beacon-fire kept in a blaze. Quite true; I own it. Is Chillon Kirby satisfied? He ought to be.

'But oh!—to be yoked is an insufferable thought, unless we name all the conditions. But to be yoked to a creature of impulses! Really I could only describe his erratic nature by commending you to the study of a dragon-fly. It would map you an idea of what he has been in the twenty-four hours since we had him here. They tell me a vain sort of person is the cause. Can she be the cause of his resolving to have a residence here, to buy up half the valley—erecting a royal palace —and marking out the site—raving about it in the wildest language, poetical if it had been a little reasonable:—and then, after a night, suddenly, unaccountably, hating the place, and being under the necessity of flying from it in hot haste, tearing us all away, as if we were attached to a kite that will neither mount nor fall, but rushes about headlong. Has he heard, or suspected? or seen certain boxes bearing a name? Livia has no suspicion, though she thinks me wonderfully contented in so dull a place, where it has rained nine days in a fortnight. I ask myself whether my manner of greeting him betrayed my expectation of another.

He has brains. It is the greatest of errors to suppose him at all like the common run of rich young noblemen. He seems to thirst for brilliant wits and original sayings. His ambition is to lead all England in everything! I readily acknowledge that he has generous ideas too; but try to hold him, deny him his liberty, and it would be seen how desperate and relentless he would be to get loose. Of this I am convinced: he would be either the most abject of lovers, or a woman (if it turned out not to be love) would find him the most unscrupulous of yokefellows. Yokefellow! She would not have her reason in consenting. A lamb and a furious bull! Papa and I have had a serious talk. He shut his ears to my comparisons, but admits, that as I am the principal person concerned, etc. Rich and a nobleman is too tempting for an anxious father; and Livia's influence is paramount. She has not said a syllable in depreciation of you. That is to her credit. She also admits that I must yield freely if at all, and she grants me the use of similes; but her tactics are to contest them one by one, and the admirable pretender is *not* as shifty as the mariner's breeze, he is not like the wandering spark in burnt paper, of which you cannot say whether it is chasing or chased: it is I who am the shifty Pole to the steadiest of magnets. She is a princess in other things besides her superiority to Physics. There will be wild scenes at Baden.

'My Diary of to-day is all bestowed on you. What have I to write in it except the pair of commas under the last line of yesterday—"*He has not come!*" Oh! to be caring for a he.

'O that I were with your sister now, on one side of her idol, to correct her extravagant idolatry! I long

for her. I had a number of nice little phrases to pet her with.

'You have said (I have it written) that men who are liked by men are the best friends for women. In which case, the earl should be worthy of our friendship; he is liked. Captain Abrane and Sir Meeson, in spite of the hard service he imposes on them with such comical haughtiness, incline to speak well of him, and Methuen Rivers—here for two days on his way to his embassy at Vienna—assured us he is the rarest of gentlemen on the point of honour of his word. They have stories of him, to confirm Livia's eulogies, showing him punctilious to chivalry. No man alive is like him in that, they say. He grieves me. All that you have to fear is my pity for one so sensitive. So speed, sir! It is not good for us to be much alone, and I am alone when you are absent.

'I hear military music!

'How grand that music makes the dullest world appear in a minute. There is a magic in it to bring you to me from the most dreadful of distances.—Chillon! it would kill me!—Writing here and you perhaps behind the hill, I can hardly bear it;—I am torn away, my hand will not any more. This music burst out to mock me! Adieu.

'I am yours.

'Your Henrietta.

'A kiss to the sister. It is owing to her.'

Carinthia kissed the letter on that last line. It seemed to her to end in a celestial shower.

She was oppressed by wonder of the writer who could run like the rill of the mountains in written speech; and

her recollection of the contents perpetually hurried to the close, which was more in her way of writing, for there the brief sentences had a throb beneath them.

She did not speak of the letter to her brother when she returned it. A night in the carriage, against his shoulder, was her happy prospect, in the thought that she would be with her dearest all night, touching him asleep, and in the sweet sense of being near to the beloved of the fairest angel of her sex. They pursued their journey soon after Anton was dismissed with warm shakes of the hand and appointments for a possible year in the future.

The blast of the postillion's horn on the dark highway moved Chillon to say: 'This is what they call posting, my dear.'

She replied: 'Tell me, brother: I do not understand, "*Let none these marks efface*," at the commencement, after most "picturesque of Castles":—that is you.'

'They are quoted from the verses of a lord who was a poet, addressed to the castle on Lake Leman. She will read them to you.'

'Will she?'

The mention of the lord set Carinthia thinking of the lord whom that beautiful SHE pitied because she was forced to wound him and he was very sensitive. Wrapped in Henrietta, she slept through the joltings of the carriage, the grinding of the wheels, the blowing of the horn, the flashes of the late moonlight and the kindling of dawn.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE ENCOUNTER OF TWO STRANGE YOUNG MEN AND THEIR CONSORTING: IN WHICH THE MALE READER IS REQUESTED TO BEAR IN MIND WHAT WILD CREATURE HE WAS IN HIS YOUTH, WHILE THE FEMALE SHOULD MARVEL CREDULOUSLY.

The young man who fancied he had robed himself in the plain homespun of a natural philosopher at the age of twenty-three journeyed limping leisurely in the mountain maid Carinthia's footsteps, thankful to the Fates for having seen her; and reproving the remainder of superstition within him, which would lay him open to smarts of evil fortune if he encouraged a senseless gratitude for good; seeing that we are simply to take what happens to us. The little inn of the village on the perch furnished him a night's lodging and a laugh of satisfaction to hear of a young lady and gentleman, and their guide, who had devoured everything eatable half a day in advance of him, all save the bread and butter, and a few scraps of meat, apologetically spread for his repast by the maid of the inn: not enough for a bantam cock, she said, promising eggs for breakfast. He vowed with an honest heart, that it was more than enough, and he was nourished by sympathy with the appetites of his precursors and the maid's description of their deeds. That name, Carinthia, went a good way to fill him.

Farther on he had plenty, but less contentment. He was compelled to acknowledge that he had expected to

meet Carinthia again at the Baths. Her absence dealt a violent shock to the aerial structure he dwelt in; for though his ardour for the life of the solitudes was unfeigned, as was his calm overlooking of social distinctions, the self-indulgent dreamer became troubled with an alarming sentience, that for him to share the passions of the world of men was to risk the falling lower than most. Women are a cause of dreams, but they are dreaded enemies of his kind of dream, deadly enemies of the immaterial dreamers; and should one of them be taken on board a vessel of the vapourish texture young Woodseer sailed in above the clouds lightly while he was in it alone, questions of past, future, and present, the three weights upon humanity, bear it down, and she must go, or the vessel sinks. And cast out of it, what was he? The asking exposed him to the steadiest wind the civilized world is known to blow. From merely thinking upon one of the daughters of earth, he was made to feel his position in that world, though he refused to understand it, and assisted by two days of hard walking he reduced Carinthia to an abstract enthusiasm, no very serious burden. His note-book sustained it easily. He wrote her name in simple fondness of the name; a verse, and hints for more, and some sentences, which he thought profound. They were composed as he sat by the roadway, on the tops of hills, and in a boat crossing a dark green lake deep under wooded mountain walls: things of priceless value.

It happened, that midway on the lake he perceived his boatman about to prime a pistol to murder the mild-eyed stillness, and he called to the man in his best German to desist. During the altercation, there

passed a countryman of his in another of the punts, who said gravely: 'I thank you for that.' It was early morning, and they had the lake to themselves, each deeming the other an intruder; for the courtship of solitude wanes when we are haunted by a second person in pursuit of it; he is discolouring matter in our pure crystal cup. Such is the worship of the picturesque; and it would appear to say, that the spirit of man finds itself yet in the society of barbarians. The case admits of good pleading either way, even upon the issue whether the exclusive or the vulgar be the more barbarous. But in those days the solicitation of the picturesque had been revived by a poet of some impassioned rhetoric, and two devotees could hardly meet, as the two meet here, and not be mutually obscurants.

They stepped ashore in turn on the same small shoot of land where a farm-house near a chapel in the shadow of cliffs did occasional service for an inn. Each had intended to pass a day and a night in this lonely dwelling-place by the lake, but a rival was less to be tolerated there than in love, and each awaited the other's departure, with an air that said: 'You are in my sunlight'; and going deeper, more sternly: 'Sir, you are an offence to Nature's pudency!'

Woodseer was the more placable of the two; he had taken possession of the bench outside, and he had his note-book and much profundity to haul up with it while fish were frying. His countryman had rushed inside to avoid him, and remained there pacing the chamber like a lion newly caged. Their boatmen were brotherly in the anticipation of provision and payment.

After eating his fish, Woodseer decided abruptly, that

as he could not have the spot to himself, memorable as it would have been to intermarry with Nature in so sacred a well-depth of the mountains, he had better be walking and climbing. Another boat paddling up the lake had been spied: solitude was not merely shared with a rival, but violated by numbers. In the first case, we detest the man; in the second, we fly from an outraged scene. He wrote a line or so in his book, hurriedly paid his bill, and started, full of the matter he had briefly committed to his pages.

At noon, sitting beside the beck that runs from the lake, he was overtaken by the gentleman he had left behind, and accosted in the informal English style, with all the politeness possible to a nervously blunt manner: 'This book is yours,—I have no doubt it is yours; I am glad to be able to restore it; I should be glad to be the owner—writer of the contents, I mean. I have to beg your excuse; I found it lying open; I looked at the page, I looked through the whole; I am quite at your mercy.'

Woodseer jumped at the sight of his note-book, felt for the emptiness of his pocket, and replied: 'Thank you, thank you. It 's of use to me, though to no one else.'

'You pardon me?'

'Certainly. I should have done it myself.'

'I cannot offer you my apologies as a stranger.' Lord Fleetwood was the name given.

Woodseer's plebeian was exchanged for it, and he stood up.

The young lord had fair, straight, thin features, with large restless eyes that lighted quickly, and a mouth that was winning in his present colloquial mood.

'You could have done the same? I should find it hard to forgive the man who pried into my secret thoughts,' he remarked.

'There they are. If one puts them to paper! . . .' Woodseer shrugged.

'Yes, yes. They never last long enough with me. So far I 'm safe. One page led to another. You can meditate. I noticed some remarks on Religions. You think deeply.'

Woodseer was of that opinion, but modesty urged him to reply with a small flourish. 'Just a few heads of ideas. When the wind puffs down a sooty chimney the air is filled with little blacks that settle pretty much like the notes in this book of mine. There they wait for another puff, or my fingers to stamp them.'

'I could tell you were the owner of that book,' said Lord Fleetwood. He swept his forehead feverishly. 'What a power it is to relieve one's brain by writing! May I ask you, which one of the Universities? . . .'

The burden of this question had a ring of irony to one whom it taught to feel rather defiantly, that he carried the blazon of a reeking tramp. 'My University,' Woodseer replied, 'was a merchant's office in Bremen for some months. I learnt more Greek and Latin in Bremen than business. I was invalided home, and then tried a merchant's office in London. I put on my hat one day, and walked into the country. My College fellows were hawkers, tinkers, tramps and ploughmen, choughs and crows. A volume of our Poets and a History of Philosophy composed my library. I had scarce any money, so I learnt how to idle inexpensively—a good first lesson. We're at the bottom of the world when we take to the road; we see men as they

were in the beginning—not so eager for harness till they get acquainted with hunger, as I did, and studied in myself the old animal having his head pushed into the collar to earn a feed of corn.'

Woodseer laughed, adding, that he had been of a serious mind in those days of the alternation of smooth indifference and sharp necessity, and he had plucked a flower from them.

His nature prompted him to speak of himself with simple candour, as he had done spontaneously to Chillon Kirby, yet he was now anxious to let his companion know at once the common stuff he was made of, together with the great stuff he contained. He grew conscious of an over-anxiety, and was uneasy, recollecting how he had just spoken about his naturalness, dimly if at all apprehending the cause of this disturbance within. What is a lord to a philosopher! But the world is around us as a cloak, if not a coat; in his ignorance he supposed it specially due to a lord seeking acquaintance with him, that he should expose his condition: doing the which appeared to subject him to parade his intellectual treasures and capacity for shaping sentences; and the effect upon Lord Fleetwood was an incentive to the display. Nevertheless he had a fretful desire to escape from the discomposing society of a lord; he fixed his knapsack and began to saunter.

The young lord was at his elbow. 'I can't part with you. Will you allow me?'

Woodseer was puzzled and had to say: 'If you wish it.'

'I do wish it: an hour's walk with you. One does not meet a man like you every day. I have to join a circle of mine in Baden, but there's no hurry; I could

be disengaged for a week. And I have things to ask you, owing to my indiscretion—but you have excused it.'

Woodseer turned for a farewell gaze at the great Watzmann, and saluted him.

'Splendid,' said Lord Fleetwood; 'but don't clap names on the mountains.—I saw written in your book: '*A text for Dada.*' You write: '*A despotism would procure a perfect solitude, but kill the ghost.*' That was my thought at the place where we were at the lake. I had it. Tell me—though I could not have written it, and "ghost" is just the word, the exact word—tell me, are you of Welsh blood? "Dad" is good Welsh—pronounce it hard.'

Woodseer answered: 'My mother was a Glamorganshire woman. My father, I know, walked up from Wales, mending boots on his road for a livelihood. He is not a bad scholar, he knows Greek enough to like it. He is a Dissenting preacher. When I strike a truism, I 've a habit of scoring it to give him a peg or tuning-fork for one of his discourses. He 's a man of talent; he taught himself, and he taught me more than I learnt at school. He is a thinker in his way. He loves Nature too. I rather envy him in some respects. He and I are hunters of Wisdom on different tracks; and he, as he says, "waits for me." He 's patient!'

'Ah, and I wanted to ask you,' Lord Fleetwood observed, bursting with it, 'I was puzzled by a name you write here and there near the end, and permit me to ask it: Carinthia! It cannot be the country? You write after the name: "*A beautiful Gorgon—a haggard Venus.*" It seized me. I have had the face before my eyes ever since. You must mean a woman.

I can't be deceived in allusions to a woman: they have heart in them. You met her somewhere about Carinthia, and gave her the name? You write—may I refer to the book?'

He received the book and flew through the leaves: 'Here—"*A panting look*": you write again: "*A look of beaten flame: a look of one who has run and at last beholds!*" But that is a living face: I see her! Here again: "*From minute to minute she is the rock that loses the sun at night and reddens in the morning.*" You could not create an idea of a woman to move you like that. No one could, I am certain of it, certain; if so, you're a wizard—I swear you are. But that's a face high over beauty. Just to know there is a woman like her, is an antidote. You compare her to a rock. Who would imagine a comparison of a woman to a rock! But rock is the very picture of beautiful Gorgon, haggard Venus. Tell me you met her, you saw her. I want only to hear she lives, she is in the world. Beautiful women compared to roses may whirl away with their handsome dragoons! A pang from them is a thing to be ashamed of. And there are men who trot about whining with it! But a Carinthia makes pain honourable. You have done what I thought impossible—fused a woman's face and grand scenery, to make them inseparable. She might be wicked for me. I should see a bright rim round hatred of her!—the rock you describe. I could endure horrors and not annihilate her! I should think her sacred.'

Woodseer turned about to have a look at the man who was even quicker than he at realizing a person from a hint of description, and almost insanely ex-

travagant in the pitch of the things he uttered to a stranger. For himself, he was open with everybody, his philosophy not allowing that strangers existed on earth. But the presence of a lord brought the conventional world to his feelings, though at the same time the title seemed to sanction the exceptional abruptness and wildness of this lord. As for suspecting him to be mad, it would have been a common idea: no stretching of speech or overstepping of social rules could waken a suspicion so spiritless in Woodseer.

He said: 'I can tell you I met her and she lives. I could as soon swim in that torrent or leap the mountain as repeat what she spoke, or sketch a feature of her. She goes into the blood, she is a new idea of women. She has the face that would tempt a gypsy to evil tellings. I could think of it as a history written in a line: Carinthia, Saint and Martyr! As for comparisons, they are flowers thrown into the fire.'

'I have had that—I have thought that,' said Lord Fleetwood. 'Go on; talk of her, pray; without comparisons. I detest them. How did you meet her? What made you part? Where is she now? I have no wish to find her, but I want thoroughly to believe in her.'

Another than Woodseer would have perceived the young lord's malady. Here was one bitten by the serpent of love, and athirst for an image of the sex to serve for the cooling herb, as youth will be. Woodseer put it down to a curious imaginative fellowship with himself. He forgot the lord, and supposed he had found his own likeness, less gifted in speech. After talking of Carinthia more and more in the abstract, he fell upon his discovery of the Great Secret of life,

against which his hearer struggled for a time, though that was cooling to him, too; but ultimately there was no resistance, and so deep did they sink into the idea of pure contemplation, that the idea of woman seemed to have become a part of it. No stronger proof of their æthereal conversational earnestness could be offered. A locality was given to the Great Secret, and of course it was the place where the most powerful recent impression had been stamped on the mind of the discoverer: the shadowy valley rolling from the slate-rock. Woodseer was too artistic a dreamer to present the passing vision of Carinthia with any associates there. She passed: the solitude accepted her and lost her; and it was the richer for the one swift gleam: she brought no trouble, she left no regrets; she was the ghost of the rocky obscurity. But now remembering her mountain carol, he chanced to speak of her as a girl.

'She is a girl?' cried Lord Fleetwood, frowning over an utter revolution of sentiment at the thought of the beautiful Gorgon being a girl; for, rapid as he was to imagine, he had raised a solid fabric upon his conception of Carinthia the woman, necessarily the woman—logically. Who but the woman could look the Gorgon! He tried to explain it to be impossible for a girl to wear the look: and his notion evidently was, that it had come upon a beautiful face in some staring horror of a world that had bitten the tender woman. She touched him sympathetically through the pathos.

Woodseer flung out vociferously for the contrary. Who but a girl could look the *beautiful* Gorgon! What other could seem an emanation of the mountain solitude? A woman would instantly breathe the world on it to destroy it. Hers would be the dramatic and not

the poetic face. It would shriek of man, wake the echoes with the tale of man, slaughter all quietude. But a girl's face has no story of poisonous intrusion. She indeed may be cast in the terrors of Nature, and yet be sweet with Nature, beautiful because she is purely of Nature. Woodseer did his best to present his view irresistibly. Perhaps he was not clear; it was a piece of skiamachy, difficult to render clear to the defeated.

Lord Fleetwood had nothing to say but 'Gorgon! a girl a Gorgon!' and it struck Woodseer as intensely unreasonable, considering that he had seen the girl whom, in his effort to portray her, he had likened to a beautiful Gorgon. He recounted the scene of the meeting with her, pictured it in effective colours, but his companion gave no response, nor a nod. They ceased to converse, and when the young lord's hired carriage drew up on the road, Woodseer required persuasion to accompany him. They were both in their different stations young tyrants of the world, ready to fight the world and one another for not having their immediate view of it such as they wanted it. They agreed, however, not to sleep in the city. Beds were to be had near the top of a mountain on the other side of the Salza, their driver informed them, and vowing themselves to that particular height, in a mutual disgust of the city, they waxed friendlier, with a reserve.

Woodseer soon had experience that he was receiving exceptional treatment from Lord Fleetwood, whose manservant was on the steps of the hotel in Salzburg on the lookout for his master.

'Sir Meeson has been getting impatient, my lord,' said the man.

Sir Meeson Corby appeared; Lord Fleetwood cut him short: 'You 're in a hurry; go at once, don't wait for me; I join you in Baden.—Do me the favour to eat with me,' he turned to Woodseer. 'And here, Corby! tell the countess I have a friend to bear me company, and there is to be an extra bedroom secured at her hotel. That swinery of a place she insists on visiting is usually crammed. With you there,' he turned to Woodseer, 'I might find it agreeable.—You can take my man, Corby; I shall not want the fellow.'

'Positively, my dear Fleetwood, you know,' Sir Meeson expostulated, 'I am under orders; I don't see how—I really can't go on without you.'

'Please yourself. This gentleman is my friend, Mr. Woodseer.'

Sir Meeson Corby was a plump little beau of forty, at war with his fat and accounting his tight blue tail coat and brass buttons a victory. His tightness made his fatness elastic; he looked wound up for a dance, and could hardly hold on a leg; but the presentation of a creature in a battered hat and soiled garments, carrying a tattered knapsack half slung, lank and with disorderly locks, as the Earl of Fleetwood's friend—the friend of the wealthiest nobleman of Great Britain!—fixed him in a perked attitude of inquiry that exhausted interrogatives. Woodseer passed him, slouching a bow. The circular stare of Sir Meeson seemed unable to contract. He directed it on Lord Fleetwood, and was then reminded that he dealt with prickles.

'Where have you been?' he said, blinking to refresh his eyeballs. 'I missed you, I ran round and round the town after you.'

'I have been to the lake.'

'Queer fish there!' Sir Meeson dropped a glance on the capture.

Lord Fleetwood took Woodseer's arm. 'Do you eat with us?' he asked the baronet, who had stayed his eating for an hour and was famished; so they strode to the dining-room.

'Do you wash, sir, before eating?' Sir Meeson said to Woodseer, caressing his hands when they had seated themselves at table. 'Appliances are to be found in this hotel.'

'Soap?' said Lord Fleetwood.

'Soap—at least, in my chamber.'

'Fetch it, please.'

Sir Meeson, of course, could not hear that. He requested the waiter to show the gentleman to a room.

Lord Fleetwood ordered the waiter to bring a hand-basin and towel. 'We're off directly and must eat at once,' he said.

'Soap—soap! my dear Fleetwood,' Sir Meeson knuckled on the table, to impress it that his appetite and his gorge demanded a thorough cleansing of those fingers, if they were to sit at one board.

'Let the waiter fetch it.'

'The soap is in my portmanteau.'

'You spoke of it as a necessity for this gentleman and me. Bring it.'

Woodseer had risen. Lord Fleetwood motioned him down. He kept an eye dead as marble on Corby, who muttered: 'You can't mean that you ask me? . . .' But the alternative was forced on Sir Meeson by too strong a power of the implacable eye; there was thunder in it, a continuity of gaze forcefuller than repetitions of the word. He knew Lord Fleetwood. Men privileged

to attend on him were dogs to the flinty young despot: they were sure to be called upon to expiate the faintest offence to him. He had hastily to consider, that he was banished beyond appeal, with the whole torture of banishment to an adorer of the Countess Livia, or else the mad behest must be obeyed. He protested, shrugged, sat fast, and sprang up, remarking, that he went with all the willingness imaginable. It could not have been the first occasion.

He was affecting the excessively obsequious when he came back bearing his metal soap-case. The performance was checked by another look solid as shot, and as quick. Woodseer, who would have done for Sir Meeson Corby or Lazarus what had been done for him, thought little of the service, but so intense a peremptoriness in the look of an eye made him uncomfortable in his own sense of independence. The humblest citizen of a free nation has that warning at some notable exhibition of tyranny in a neighbouring State: it acts like a concussion of the air.

Lord Fleetwood led an easy dialogue with him and Sir Meeson, on their different themes immediately, which was not less impressive to an observer. He listened to Sir Meeson's entreaties that he should start at once for Baden, and appeared to pity the poor gentleman, condemned by his office to hang about him in terror of his liege lady's displeasure. Presently, near the close of the meal, drawing a ring from his finger, he handed it to the baronet, and said, 'Give her that. She knows I shall follow that.' He added to himself:—I shall have ill-luck till I have it back! and he asked Woodseer whether he put faith in the virtue of talismans.

'I have never possessed one,' said Woodseer, with his

natural frankness. 'It would have gone long before this for a night's lodging.'

Sir Meeson heard him, and instantly urged Lord Fleetwood not to think of dismissing his man Francis. 'I beg it, Fleetwood! I beg you to take the man. Her ladyship will receive me badly, ring or no ring, if she hears of your being left alone. I really can't present myself. I shall not go, not go. I say no.'

'Stay, then,' said Fleetwood.

He turned to Woodseer with an air of deference, and requested the privilege of glancing at his note-book again, and scanned it closely at one of the pages. 'I believe it true,' he cried; 'I had a half recollection of it—I have had some such thought, but never could put it in words. You have thought deeply.'

'That is only a surface thought, or common reflection,' said Woodseer.

Sir Meeson stared at them in turn. Judging by their talk and the effect produced on the earl, he took Woodseer for a sort of conjuror.

It was his duty to utter a warning.

He drew Fleetwood aside. A word was whispered, and they broke asunder with a snap. Francis was called. His master gave him his keys, and despatched him into the town to purchase a knapsack or bag for the outfit of a jolly beggar. The prospect delighted Lord Fleetwood. He sang notes from the deep chest, flaunting like an opera brigand, and contemplating his wretched satellite's indecision with brimming amusement.

'Remember, we fight for our money. I carry mine,' he said to Woodseer.

'Wouldn't it be expedient, Fleetwood . . .' Sir Meeson suggested a treasurer in the person of himself.

'Not a florin, Corby! I should find it all gambled away at Baden.'

'But I am not Abrane, I'm not Abrane! I never play, I have no mania, none. It would be prudent, Fleetwood.'

'The slightest bulging of a pocket would show on you, Corby; and they would be at you, they would fall on you and pluck you to have another fling. I'd rather my money should go to a knight of the road than feed that dragon's jaw. A highwayman seems an honest fellow compared with your honourable corporation of fly-catchers. I could surrender to him with some satisfaction after a trial of the better man. I've tried these tables, and couldn't stir a pulse. Have you?'

It had to be explained to Woodseer what was meant by trying the tables. 'Not I,' said he, in strong contempt of the queer allurement.

Lord Fleetwood studied him half a minute, as if measuring and discarding a suspicion of the young philosopher's possible weakness under temptation.

Sir Meeson Corby accompanied the oddly assorted couple through the town and a short way along the road to the mountain, for the sake of quieting his conscience upon the subject of his leaving them together. He could not have sat down a second time at a table *with those hands*. He said it:—he could not have done the thing. So the best he could do was to let them go. Like many of his class, he had a mind open to the effect of striking contrasts, and the spectacle of the wealthiest nobleman in Great Britain tramping the road, pack on

back, with a young nobody for his comrade, a total stranger, who might be a cut-throat, and was avowedly next to a mendicant, charged him with quantities of interjectory matter, that he caught himself firing to the foreign people on the highway. Hundreds of thousands a year, and tramping it like a pedlar, with a beggar for his friend! He would have given something to have an English ear near him as he watched them rounding under the mountain they were about to climb.

CHAPTER IX

CONCERNING THE BLACK GODDESS FORTUNE AND THE WORSHIP OF HER, TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTION OF SOME OF HER VOTARIES

In those early days of Fortune's pregnant alternations of colour between the Red and the Black, exhibited publicly, as it were a petroleum spring of the ebony-fiery lake below, Black-Forest Baden was the sprightliest of the ante-chambers of Hades. Thither in the ripeness of the year trooped the devotees of the sable goddess to perform sacrifice; and annually among them the beautiful Livia, the Countess of Fleetwood; for nowhere else had she sensation of the perfect repose which is rocked to a slumber by gales.

She was not of the creatures who are excited by an atmosphere of excitement; she took it as the nymph of the stream her native wave, and swam on the flood with expansive languor, happy to have the master passions about her; one or two of which her dainty hand

caressed, fearless of a sting; the lady petted them as her swans. It surprised her to a gentle contempt of men and women, that they should be ruffled either by love or play. A withholding from the scene will naturally arouse disturbing wishes; but to be present lulls; for then we live, we are in our element. And who could expect, what sane person can desire, perpetual good luck? Fortune, the goddess, and young Love, too, are divine in their mutability: and Fortune would resemble a humdrum housewife, Love a droning husband, if constancy were practised by them. Observe the staggering and plunging of the blindfold wretch seeking to be persuaded of their faithfulness.

She could make for herself a quiet centre in the heart of the whirlwind, but the whirlwind was required. The clustered lights at the corner of the vale under forest hills, the burst of music, the blazing windows of the saloons of the Furies, and the gamblers advancing and retreating, with their totally opposite views of consequences, and fashions of wearing or tearing the mask; and closer, the figures shifting up and down the promenade, known and unknown faces, and the histories half known, half woven, weaving fast, which flew their threads to provoke speculation; pleasantly embraced and diverted the cool-blooded lady surrounded by her courtiers, who could upon occasion supply the luminous clue or anecdote. She had an intuitive liveliness to detect interchanges of eyes, the shuttle of intrigue; the mild hypocrisy, the clever audacity, the suspicion confirmed, the complication threatening to become resonant and terrible; and the old crossing the young and the young outwitting the old, wiles of fair traitors and dark, knaves of all suits of the pack. A more intimate

acquaintance with their lineaments inspired a regard for them, such as poets may feign the throned high moon to entertain for objects causing her rays to flash.

The simple fools, performing in character, were a neutral people, grotesques and arabesques wreathed about the margins of the scene. Venus or Fortune smote them to a relievo distinguishing one from another. Here, however, as elsewhere, the core of interest was with the serious population, the lovers and the players in earnest, who stood round the furnace and pitched themselves into it, not always under a miscalculation of their chances of emerging transfigured instead of serving for fuel. These, the tragical children of folly, were astute: they played with lightning, and they knew the conditions of the game; victories were to be had.

The ulterior conditions of the game, the price paid for a victory, they thought little of: for they were feverish worshippers of the phantasmal deity called the Present; a god reigning over the Past, appreciable only in the Future; whose whiff of actual being is composed of the embryo idea of the union of these two periods. Still he is occasionally a benevolent god to the appetites; which have but to be continuous to establish him in permanence; and as nothing in us more readily supposes perpetuity than the appetite rushing to destroy itself, the rational nature of the most universal worship on earth is perceived at once.

Now the price paid for a victory is this: that having been favoured in a single instance by the spouse of the aforesaid eminent divinity—the Black Goddess of the golden fringes—men believe in her forever after, behold her everywhere, they belong to her. Their faith as to sowing and reaping has gone; and so has their capacity

to see the actual as it is; she has the power to attach them to her skirts the more by rewarding their impassioned devotion with cuffs and scorns. They have ceased to have a first notion upon anything without a second haunting it, which directs them to propitiate Fortune.

But I am reminded by the convulsions of Dame Gossip, that the wisdom of our ancestors makes it a mere hammering of commonplace to insist on such reflections. Many of them, indeed, took the union of the Black Goddess and the Rosy Present for the composition of the very Arch-Fiend. Some had a shot at the strange conjecture, figuring her as tired of men in the end and challenging him below—equally tired of his easy conquests of men since the glorious old times of the duelling saints. By virtue of his one incorrigible weakness, which we know him to have as long as we have it ourselves: viz., the belief in her existence, she is to get the better of him.

Upon this point the experience of Captain Abrane has a value. Livia was a follower of the Red and Black and the rounding ball in the person of the giant captain, through whom she received her succession of sweetly teasing thrills and shocks, as one of the adventurous company they formed together. The place was known to him as the fair Philistine to another muscular hero; he had been shorn there before, and sent forth tottering, treating the friends he met as pillars to fall with him; and when the operation was done thoroughly, he pronounced himself refreshed by it, like a more sensible Samson, the cooler for his clipping. Then it was that he relapsed undistractedly upon processes of his mind: and he often said he thought Fortune would beat the devil.

Her power is shown in the moving of her solicitors to think, instantly after they have made their cast, that the reverse of it was what they intended. It comes as though she had withdrawn the bandage from her forehead and dropped a leaden glance on them, like a great dame angry to have her signal misinterpreted. Well, then, distinguished by the goddess in such a manner, we have it proved to us how she wished to favour: for the reverse wins, and we who are pinched blame not her cruelty but our blind folly. This is true worship. Henceforth the pain of her nip is mingled with the dream of her kiss: between the positive and the imagined of her we remain confused until the purse is an empty body on a gallows, honour too, perhaps.

Captain Abrane was one of the Countess Livia's numerous courtiers on the border of the promenade under the lighted saloons. A colossus inactive, he had little to say among the chattering circle; for when seated, cards were wanted to animate him: and he looked entirely out of place and unfitted, like a great vessel's figure-head in a shipwright's yard.

She murmured: 'Not this evening?'

Abrane quoted promptly a line of nursery song: 'How shall he cut it without e'er a knife?'

'Have we run it down so low?' said she, with no reproach in her tone.

The captain shrugged over his clean abyss, where nothing was.

Yesterday their bank presented matronly proportions. But an importuned goddess reduces the most voluminous to bare stitches within a few winks of an eye.

Livia turned to a French gentleman of her court,

M. de St. Ombre, and pursued a conversation. He was a stately cavalier, of the Gallicized Frankish outlines, ready, but grave in his bearing, grave in his delivery, trimly moustached, with a Guise beard.

His profound internal question relating to this un-English beauty of the British Isles :—had she no passion in her nature? was not convinced by her apparent insensibility to Fortune's whips.

Sir Meeson Corby inserted a word of Bull French out of place from time to time.

As it might be necessary to lean on the little man for weapons of war, supposing Lord Fleetwood delayed his arrival yet another day, Livia was indulgent. She assisted him to think that he spoke the foreign tongue.

Mention of Lord Fleetwood set Sir Meeson harping again on his alarms, in consideration of the vagabond object the young lord had roamed away with.

'You forget that Russett has gypsy in him: Welsh! it's about the same,' said Livia. 'He can take excellent care of himself and his purse.'

'Countess, he is a good six days overdue.'

'He will be in time for the ball at the Schloss.'

Sir Meeson Corby produced an aspect of the word 'if,' so perkily, that the dejected Captain Abrane laughed outright and gave him double reason to fret for Lord Fleetwood's arrival, by saying: 'If he hangs off much longer, I shall have to come on you for another fifty.'

Our two pedestrians out of Salzburg were standing up in the night of cloud and pines above the glittering pool, having made their way along the path from the hill anciently dedicated to the god Mercury; and at the moment when Sir Meeson put forth his frilled wrists

to say: 'If you had seen *his hands*—the creature Fleetwood trotted off alone with!—you'd be a bit anxious too'; the young lord called his comrade to gaze underneath them: 'There they are, hard at it, at their play!—it's the word used for the filthiest gutter scramble.'

They had come to know something of one another's humours; which are taken by young men for their characters; and should the humours please, they are friends, until further humours develop, trying these nascent conservatives hard to suit them to their moods as well as the accustomed. Lord Fleetwood had discovered in his companion, besides the spirit of independence and the powers of thought impressed on him by Woodseer's precocious flashes, a broad playfulness, that trenched on buffoonery; it astonished, amused, and relieved him, loosening the spell of reverence cast over him by one who could so wonderfully illumine his brain. Prone to admire and bend the knee where he admired, he chafed at subjection, unless he had the particular spell constantly renewed. A tone in him once or twice of late, different from the comrade's, had warned Woodseer to be guarded.

Susceptible, however, of the extreme contrast between the gamblers below and Nature's lover beside him, Fleetwood returned to his enthusiasm without thinking it a bondage.

'I shall never forget the walk we've had. I have to thank you for the noblest of pleasures. You've taught me—well, a thousand things; the things money can't buy. What mornings they were! And the dead-tired nights! Under the rock and up to see the snowy peak pink in a gap of thick mist. You were right: it made

a crimsoning colour shine like a new idea. Up in those mountains one walks with the divinities, you said. It 's perfectly true. I shall remember I did. I have a treasure for life! Now I understand where you get your ideas. The life we lead down there is hoggish. You have chosen the right. You 're right, over and over again, when you say, the dirty sweaters are nearer the angels for cleanliness than my Lord and Lady Sybarite out of a bath, in chemical scents. A man who thinks, loathes their High Society. I went through Juvenal at college. But you—to be sure, you add example—make me feel the contempt of it more. I am everlastingly indebted to you. Yes, I won't forget: you preach against the despising of anything.'

Now this was pleasant in Woodseer's ears, inasmuch as it established the young nobleman as the pupil of his philosophy for the conduct of life; and to fortify him, he replied:—

'Set your mind on the beauty, and there 'll be no room for comparisons. Most of them are unjust, precious few instructive. In this case, they spoil both pictures: and that scene down there rather hooks me; though I prefer the Dachstein in the wane of the afterglow. You called it Carinthia.'

'I did: the beautiful Gorgon, haggard Venus—if she is to be a girl!' Fleetwood rejoined. 'She looked burnt out—a spectre.'

'One of the admirably damned,' said Woodseer, and he murmured with enjoyment: 'Between the lights—that 's the beauty and the tragedy of Purgatory!'

His comrade fell in with the pictured idea: 'You hit it:—not what you called the 'sublimely milky,' and not squalid as you 'll see the faces of the gambling

women at the tables below. Oblige me—may I beg? —don't clap names on the mountains we've seen. It stamps guide-book on them, English tourist, horrors. We'll moralize over the crowds at the tables down there. On the whole, it's a fairish game: you know the odds against you, as you don't on the Turf or the Bourse. Have your fling; but don't get bitten. There's a virus. I'm not open to it. Others are.'

Hereupon Woodseer, wishing to have his individuality recognised in the universality it consented to, remarked on an exchequer that could not afford to lose, and a disposition free of the craving to win.

These were, no doubt, good reasons for abstaining, and they were grand morality. They were, at the same time, customary phrases of the unfleshed in folly. They struck Fleetwood with a curious reminder of the puking inexperienced, whom he had seen subsequently plunge suicidally. He had a sharp vision of the attractive forces of the game; and his elemental nature exulted in siding with the stronger against a pretender to the superhuman. For Woodseer had spoken a trifle loftily, as quite above temptation. To see a forewarned philosopher lured to try the swim on those tides, pulled along the current, and caught by the undertug of the lasher, would be fun.

'We'll drop down on them, find our hotel, and have a look at what they're doing,' he said, and stepped.

Woodseer would gladly have remained. The starlit black ridges about him and the dragon's mouth yawning underneath were an opposition of spiritual and mundane; innocent, noxious; exciting to the youthful philosopher. He had to follow, and so rapidly in

the darkness that he stumbled and fell on an arm; a small matter.

Bed-chambers awaited them at the hotel, none of the party: and Fleetwood's man-servant was absent: 'Gambling, the rascal!' he said. Woodseer heard the first note of the place in that.

His leader was washed, neatly dressed, and knocking at his door very soon, impatient to be off, and he flung a promise of 'supper presently' to one whose modest purse had fallen into a debate with this lordly hostelry, counting that a supper and a night there would do for it. They hurried on to the line of promenaders, a river of cross-currents by the side of seated groups; and the willowy swish of silken dresses, feminine perfumery, cigar-smoke, chatter, laughter, told of pleasure reigning.

Fleetwood scanned the groups. He had seen enough in a moment and his face blackened. A darting waiter was called to him.

He said to Woodseer, savagely, as it sounded: 'You shall have something to joint your bones!' What cause of wrath he had was past a guess: a wolf at his vitals bit him, hardening his handsome features.

The waiter darted back, bearing a tray and tall glasses filled each with piled parti-coloured liqueurs, on the top of which an egg-yolk swam. Fleetwood gave example. Swallowing your egg, the fiery-velvet triune behind slips after it, in an easy milky way, like a princess's train on a state-march, and you are completely transformed, very agreeably; you have become a merry demon. 'Well, yes, it's next to magic,' he replied to Woodseer's astonished snigger after the draught, and explained, that it was a famous Viennese four-of-the-

morning panacea, the revellers' electrical restorer. 'Now you can hold on for an hour or two, and then we 'll sup. At Rome?'

'Ay! Druids to-morrow!' cried the philosopher bewitched.

He found himself bowing to a most heavenly lady, composed of day and night in her colouring, but more of night, where the western edge has become a pale steel blade. Men were around her, forming a semi-circle. The world of men and women was mere timber and leafage to this flower of her sex, glory of her kind. How he behaved in her presence, he knew not; he was beyond self-criticism or conscious reflection; simply the engine of the commixed three liqueurs, with parlous fine thoughts, and a sense of steaming into the infinite.

To leave her was to have her as a moon in the heavens and to think of her creatively. A swarm of images rushed about her and away, took lustre and shade. She was a miracle of greyness, her eyes translucently grey, a dark-haired queen of the twilights; and his heart sprang into his brain to picture the novel beauty; language became a flushed Bacchanal in a ring of dancing similes. Lying beside a bank of silvery cinquefoil against a clear evening sky, where the planet Venus is a point of new and warmer light, one has the vision of her. Or something of Persephone rising to greet her mother, when our beam of day first melts through her as she kneels to gather an early bud of the year, would be near it. Or there is a lake in mid-forest, that curls part in shadow under the foot of morning: there we have her.

He strained to the earthly and the skyey likenesses of his marvel of human beauty because they bestowed her

on him in passing. All the while, he was gazing on a green gaming-table.

The gold glittered, and it heaped or it vanished. Contemptuous of money, beyond the limited sum for his needs, he gazed; imagination was blunted in him to the hot drama of the business. Moreover his mind was engaged in insisting that the Evening Star is not to be called Venus, because of certain stories; and he was vowed to defend his lady from any allusion to them. This occupied him. By degrees, the visible asserted its authority; his look on the coin fell to speculating. Oddly, too, he was often right;—the money, staked on the other side, would have won. He considered it rather a plain calculation than a guess.

Philosophy withdrew him from his temporary interest in the tricks of a circling white marble ball. The chuck-farthing of street urchins has quite as much dignity. He compared the creatures dabbling over the board to summer flies on butcher's meat, periodically scared by a cloth. More in the abstract, they were snatching at a snapdragon bowl. It struck him, that the gamblers had thronged on an invitation to drink the round of seed-time and harvest in a gulp. Again they were desperate gleaners, hopping, skipping, bleeding, amid a whizz of scythe-blades, for small wisps of booty. Nor was it long before the presidency of an ancient hoary Goat-Satan might be perceived, with skew-eyes and pucker-mouth, nursing a hoof on a knee.

Our mediæval Enemy sat symbolical in his deformities, as in old Italian and Dutch thick-line engravings of him. He rolled a ball for souls, excited like kittens, to catch it, and tumbling into the dozens of vacant pits. So it seemed to Woodseer, whose perceptions were dis-

coloured by hereditary antagonism. Had he preserved his philosopher's eye, he would have known that the Hoofed One is too wily to show himself, owing to his ugliness. The Black Goddess and no other presides at her own game. She (it is good for us to know it) is the Power who challenges the individual, it is he who spreads the net for the mass. She liquefies the brain of man; he petrifies or ossifies the heart. From her comes craziness, from him perversity: a more provocative and, on the whole, more contagious disease. The gambler does not seek to lead his fellows into perdition; the snared of the Demon have pleasure in the act. Hence our naturally interested forecasts of the contest between them: for if he is beaten, as all must be at the close of an extended game with her, we have only to harden the brain against her allurements and we enter a clearer field.

Woodseer said to Fleetwood: 'That ball has a look of a nymph running round and round till she changes to one of the Fates.'

'We 'll have a run with her,' said Fleetwood, keener for business than for metaphors at the moment.

He received gold for a bank-note. Captain Abrane hurriedly begged a loan. Both of them threw. Neither of them threw on the six numbers Woodseer would have selected, and they lost. He stated that the number of 17 had won before. Abrane tried the transversal enclosing this favoured number. 'Of course!' he cried, with foul resignation and a hostile glare: the ball had seated itself and was grinning at him from the lowest of the stalls.

Fleetwood quitted the table-numbers to throw on Pair; he won, won again, pushed his luck and lost,

dragging Abrane with him. The giant varied his tone of acquiescence in Fortune's whims: 'Of course! I've only to fling! Luck hangs right enough till I put down my stake.'

'If the luck has gone three times, the chances . . .' Woodseer was rather inquiring than pronouncing: Lord Fleetwood cut him short. 'The chances are equally the contrary!' and discomposed his argumentative mind.

As argument in such a place was impossible, he had a wild idea of example—'just to see'; and though he smiled, his brain was liquefying. Upon a calculation of the chances, merely for the humour of it, he laid a silver piece on the first six, which had been neglected. They were now blest. He laid his winnings on the number 17. Who would have expected it? why, the player, surely! Woodseer comported himself like a veteran: he had proved that you can calculate the chances. Instead of turning in triumph to Lord Fleetwood, he laid gold pieces to hug the number 17, and ten in the centre. And it is the truth, he hoped then to lose and have done with it—after proving his case. The ball whirled, kicked, tried for seat in two, in three points, and entered 17. The usual temporary wonderment flew round the table; and this number was courted in dread, avoided with apprehension.

Abrane let fly a mighty breath: 'Virgin, by Jove!'

Success was a small matter to Gower Woodseer. He displayed his contempt of fortune by letting his heap of bank-notes lie on Impair, and he won. Abrane bade him say 'Maximum' in a furious whisper. He did so, as one at home with the word; and winning repeatedly, observed to Fleetwood: 'Now I can understand what

historians mean, in telling us of heroes rushing into the fray and vainly seeking death. I always thought death was to be had, if you were in earnest.'

Fleetwood scrutinized the cast of his features and the touch of his fingers on the crispy paper.

'Come to another of these "green fields,"' he returned briefly. 'The game here is child's play.'

Urging Virgin Luck not to quit his initiatory table, the captain reluctantly went at their heels. Shortly before the tables were clad in mantles for the night, he reported to Livia one of the great cases of Virgin Luck; described it, from the silver piece to the big heap of notes, and drew on his envy of the fellow to sketch the indomitable coolness shown in following or in quitting a run. 'That fellow it is, Fleetwood's tag-rag; holds his head like a street-fiddler; Woodler or some name. But there's nothing to be done if we don't cultivate him. He must have pocketed a good three thousand and more. They had a quarrel about calculations of chances, and Fleet ran the V up his forehead at a piece of impudence. Fellow says some high-flying stuff; Fleet brightens like a Sunday chimney-sweep. If I believed in Black Arts, upon my word!'

'Russett is not usually managed with ease,' the lady said.

Her placid observation was directed on the pair then descending the steps.

'Be careful how you address this gentleman,' she counselled Abrane. 'The name is not Woodler, I know. It must be the right name or none.'

Livia's fairest smile received them. She heard the captain accosting the child of luck as Mr. Woodler, and she made a rustle in rising to take Fleetwood's arm.

'We haven't dined, we have to sup,' said he.

'You are released at the end of the lamps. You redeem your ring, Russett, and I will restore it. I have to tell you, Henrietta is here to-morrow.'

'She might be in a better place.'

'The place where she is to be seen is not generally undervalued by men. It is not her fault that she is absent. The admiral was persuaded to go and attend those cavalry manœuvres with the Grand Duke, to whom he had been civil when in command of the Mediterranean squadron. You know, the admiral believes he has military—I mean soldierly—genius; and the delusion may have given him wholesome exercise and helped him to forget his gout. So far, Henrietta will have been satisfied. She cannot have found much amusement among dusty troopers or at that court at Carlsruhe. Our French milliner there has helped in retarding her—quite against her will. She has had to choose a ball-dress for the raw mountain-girl they have with them, and get her fitted, and it 's a task! Why take her to the ball? But the admiral 's infatuated with this girl, and won't hear of her exclusion—because, he says, she understands a field of battle; and the Ducal party have taken to her. Ah, Russett, you should not have flown! No harm, only Henrietta does require a trifle of management. She writes, that she is sure of you for the night at the Schloss.'

'Why, ma'am?'

'You have given your word. "He never breaks his lightest word," she says.'

'It sounds like the beginning of respect.'

'The rarest thing men teach women to feel for them!'

'A respectable love match—eh? Good Lord!—You 'll be civil to my friend. You have struck him to the dust. You have your one poetical admirer in him.'

'I am honoured, Russett.'

'Cleared out, I suppose? Abrane is a funnel for pouring into that Bank. Have your fun as you like it! I shall get supplies to-morrow. By the way, you have that boy Cressett here. What are you doing with him?'

Livia spoke of watching over him and guarding him.

'He was at the table beside me, bursting to have a fling; and my friend Mr. Woodseer said, it was "Adonis come to spy the boar":—the picture!'

Prompt as bugle to the breath, Livia proposed to bet him fifty pounds that she would keep young Cressett from gambling a single louis. The pretty saying did not touch her.

Fleetwood moved and bowed. Sir Meeson Corby simulated a petrifaction of his frame at seeing the Countess of Fleetwood actually partly bent with her gracious acknowledgment of the tramp's gawky homage.

CHAPTER X

SMALL CAUSES

A CLOCK sounded one of the later morning hours of the night as Gower Woodseer stood at his hotel door, having left Fleetwood with a band of revellers. The night was now clear. Stars were low over the ridge of pines, dropped to a league of our strange world to

record the doings. Beneath this roof lay the starry She. He was elected to lie beneath it also: and he beheld his heavenly lady floating on the lull of soft white cloud among her sister spheres. After the way of imaginative young men, he had her features more accurately now she was hidden, and he idealized her more. He could escape for a time from his coil of similes and paint for himself the irids of her large, long, grey eyes darkly rimmed; purest water-grey, lucid within the ring, beneath an arch of lashes. He had them fast; but then he fell to contemplating their exceeding rareness; and the mystery of the divinely grey swung a kindled fancy to the flight with some queen-witch of woods, of whom a youth may dream under the spell of twilights, East or West, among forest branches.

She had these marvellous eyes and the glamour for men. She had not yet met a man with the poetical twist in the brain to prize her elementally. All admitted the glamour; none of her courtiers were able to name it, even the poetical head giving it a name did not think of the witch in her looks as a witch in her deeds, a modern daughter of the mediæval. To her giant squire the eyes of the lady were queer: they were unlit glass lamps to her French suppliant; and to the others, they were attractively uncommon; the charm for them being in her fine outlines, her stature, carriage of her person, and unalterable composure; particularly her latent daring. She had the effect on the general mind of a lofty crag-castle with a history. There was a whiff of gunpowder exciting the atmosphere in the anecdotal part of the history known.

Woodseer sat for a certain time over his note-book.

He closed it with a thrilling conceit of the right thing written down; such as entomologists feel when they have pinned the rare insect. But what is butterfly or beetle compared with the chiselled sentences carved out of air to constitute us part owner of the breathing image and spirit of an adored fair woman? We repeat them, and the act of repeating them makes her close on ours, by virtue of the eagle thought in the stamped gold of the lines.

Then, though she is not ever to be absolutely ours (and it is an impoverishing desire that she should be), we have beaten out the golden sentence—the essential she and we in one. But is it so precious after all? A suspicious ring of an adjective drops us on a sickening descent.

The author dashed at his book, examined, approved, keenly enjoyed, and he murderously scratched the adjective. She stood better without it, as a bright planet star issuing from clouds, which are perhaps an adornment to our hackneyed moon. This done, he restored the book to his coat's breast-pocket, smiling or sneering at the rolls of bank-notes there, disdaining to count them. They stuffed an inner waistcoat pocket and his trousers also. They at any rate warranted that we can form a calculation of the chances, let Lord Fleetwood rave as he may please.

Woodseer had caught a glimpse of the elbow-point of his coat when flinging it back to the chair. There was distinctly abrasion. Philosophers laugh at such things. But they must be the very ancient pallium philosophers, ensconced in tubs, if they pretend to merriment over the spectacle of nether garments gapped at the spot where man is most vulnerable. He got

loose from them and held them up to the candle, and the rays were admitted, neither winking nor peeping. Serviceable old clothes, no doubt. Time had not dealt them the final kick before they scored a good record. They dragged him, nevertheless, to a sort of confession of some weakness, that he could not analyze for the swirl of emotional thoughts in the way; and they had him to the ground. An eagle of the poetic becomes a mere squat toad through one of these petty material strokes. Where then is Philosophy? But who can be philosopher and the fervent admirer of a glorious lady? Ask again, who in that frowzy garb can presume to think of her or stand within fifty miles of her orbit?

A dreary two hours brought round daylight. Woodseer quitted his restless bed and entered the abjured habiliments, chivalrous enough to keep from denouncing them until he could cast the bad skin they now were to his uneasy sensations. He remembered having stumbled and fallen on the slope of the hill into this vale, and probably then the mischief had occurred: though a brush would have been sufficient, the slightest collision. Only, it was odd that the accident should have come to pass just previous to his introduction. How long antecedent was it? He belaboured his memory to reckon how long it was from the moment of the fall to the first sight of that lady.

His window looked down on the hotel stable-yard. A coach-house door was open. Odd or not—and it certainly looked like fate—that he should be bowing to his lady so shortly after the mishap expelling him, he had to leave the place. A groom in the yard was hailed, and cheerily informed him he could be driven to Carlsruhe as soon as the coachman had

finished his breakfast. At Carlsruhe a decent refitting might be obtained, and he could return from exile that very day, thanks to the praiseworthy early hours of brave old Germany.

He had swallowed a cup of coffee with a roll of stale bread, in the best of moods, and entered his carriage; he was calling the order to start when a shout surprised his ear: 'The fiddler bolts!'

Captaine Abrane's was the voice. About twenty paces behind, Abrane, Fleetwood, and one whom they called Chummy Potts, were wildly waving arms. Woodseer could hear the captain's lowered roar: 'Race you, Chummy, couple of louis, catch him first!' The two came pelting up to the carriage abreast.

They were belated revellers, and had been carelessly strolling under the pinky cloudlets bedward, after a prolonged carousal with the sons and daughters of hilarious nations, until the apparition of Virgin Luck on the wing shocked all prospect of a dead fight with the tables that day.

'Here, come, no, by Jove, you, Mr. Woodsir! won't do, not a bit! can't let you go,' cried Abrane, as he puffed. 'What! cut and run and leave us, post winnings—bankers—knock your luck on the head! What a fellow! Can't let you. Countess never forgive us. You promised—swore it—play for her. Struck all aheap to hear of your play! You've got the trick. Her purse for you in my pocket. Never a fellow played like you. Cool as a cook over a gridiron! *Comme un phare!* St. Ombre says—that Frenchman. You astonished the Frenchman! And now cut and run? Can't allow it. Honour of the country at stake.'

'Hands off!' Woodseer bellowed, feeling himself a leaky vessel in dock, his infirmities in danger of exposure. 'If you pull!—what the deuce do you want? Stop!'

'Out you come,' said the giant, and laughed at the fun to his friends, who were entirely harmonious when not violently dissenting, as is the way with Night's rollickers before their beds have reconciled them to the day-beams.

Woodseer would have had to come and was coming; he happened to say: 'Don't knock my pipe out of my mouth,' and touched a chord in the giant.

'All right; smoke your pipe,' was answered to his remonstrance.

During the amnesty, Fleetwood inquired: 'Where are you going?'

'For a drive, to be sure. Don't you see!'

'You'll return?'

'I intend to return.'

'He's beastly excited,' quoth Abrane.

Fleetwood silenced him, though indeed Woodseer appeared suspiciously restive.

'Step down and have a talk with me before you start. You're not to go yet.'

'I must. I'm in a hurry.'

'What's the hurry?'

'I want to smoke and think.'

'Takes a carriage on the top of the morning to smoke and think! Hark at that!' Abrane sang out. 'Oh, come along quietly, you fellow, there's a good fellow! It concerns us all, every man Jack; we're all bound up in your fortunes. Fellow with luck like yours can't pretend to behave independently. Out of reason!'

'Do you give me your word you return?' said Fleetwood.

Woodseer replied: 'Very well, I do; there, I give my word. Hang it! now I know what they mean by "anything for a quiet life." Just a shake brings us down on that cane-bottomed chair!'

'You return to-day?'

'To-day, yes, yes.'

Fleetwood signified the captive's release; and Abrane immediately suggested:—

'Pop old Chummy in beside the fellow to mount guard.'

Potts was hustled and precipitated into the carriage by the pair, with whom he partook this last glimmer of their night's humorous extravagances, for he was an easy creature. The carriage drove off.

'Keep him company!' they shouted.

'Escort him back!' said he, nodding.

He remarked to Woodseer: 'With your permission,' concerning the seat he took, and that 'a draught of morning air would do him good.' Then he laughed politely, exchanged wavy distant farewells with his comrades, touched a breast-pocket for his case of cigars, pulled forth one, obtained 'the loan of a light,' blew clouds and fell into the anticipated composure, quite understanding the case and his office.

Both agreed as to the fine morning it was. Woodseer briefly assented to his keeper's reiterated encomium on the morning, justified on oath. A fine morning, indeed. 'Damned if I think I ever saw so fine a morning!' Potts cried. He had no other subject of conversation with this hybrid: and being equally disposed for hot discourse or for sleep, the deprivation of the one and

the other forced him to seek amusement in his famous reading of character; which was profound among the biped equine, jockeys, turfmen, sharpers, pugilists, demireps. He fronted Woodseer with square shoulders and wide knees, an elbow on one, a fist on the other, engaged in what he termed the 'prodding of his eel,' or 'nicking of his man,' a method of getting straight at the riddle of the fellow by the test of how long he could endure a flat mute stare and return look for look unblinking. The act of smoking fortifies and partly covers the insolence. But if by chance an equable, not too narrowly focussed, counterstare is met, our impertinent inquisitor may resemble the fisherman pulled into deep waters by his fish. Woodseer perused his man, he was not attempting to fathom him: he had besides other stuff in his head. Potts had naught, and the poor particle he was wriggled under detection.

'Tobacco before breakfast!' he said disgustedly, tossing his cigar to the road. 'Your pipe holds on. Bad thing, I can tell you, that smoking on an empty stomach. No trainer 'd allow it, not for a whole fee or double. Kills your wind. Let me ask you, my good sir, are you going to turn? We 've sat a fairish stretch. I begin to want my bath and a shave, linen and coffee. Thirsty as a dog.'

He heard with stupefaction, that he could alight on the spot, if he pleased, otherwise he would be driven into Carlsruhe. And now they had a lingual encounter, hot against cool; but the eyes of Chummy Potts having been beaten, his arguments and reproaches were not backed by the powerful looks which are an essential part of such eloquence as he commanded. They fled from his enemy's currishly, even while he was launching

epithets. His pathetic position subjected him to beg that Woodseer would direct the driver to turn, for he had no knowledge of 'their German lingo.' And said he: 'You've nothing to laugh at, that I can see. I'm at your mercy, you brute; caught in a trap. I never walk;—and the sun fit to fry a mackerel along that road! I apologize for abusing you; I can't do more. You're an infernally clever player—there! And, upon my soul, I could drink ditchwater! But if you're going in for transactions at Carlsruhe, mark my words, your luck's gone. Laugh as much as you like.'

Woodseer happened to be smiling over the excellent reason for not turning back which inflicted the wofulness. He was not without sympathy for a thirsty wretch, and guessing, at the sight of an avenue of limes to the left of the road, that a wayside inn was below, he said: 'You can have coffee or beer in two minutes,' and told the driver where to pull up.

The sight of a grey-jacketed, green-collared sportsman, dog at heel, crossing the flat land to the hills of the forest, pricked him enviously, and caused him to ask what change had come upon him, that he should be hurrying to a town for a change of clothes. Just as Potts was about to jump out, a carriage, with a second behind it, left the inn door. He rubbed a hand on his unshaven chin, tried a glance at his shirt-front, and remarking: 'It won't be any one who knows me,' stood to let the carriages pass. In the first were a young lady and a gentleman: the lady brilliantly fair, an effect of auburn hair and complexion, despite the signs of a storm that had swept them and had not cleared from her eyelids. Apparently her maid, a damsel sitting straight up, occupied the carriage following; and this fresh-faced

young person twice quickly and bluntly bent her head as she was driven by. Potts was unacquainted with the maid. But he knew the lady well, or well enough for her inattention to be the bigger puzzle. She gazed at the Black Forest hills in the steadiest manner, with eyes betraying more than they saw; which solved part of the puzzle, of course. Her reasons for declining to see him were exposed by the presence of the gentleman beside her. At the same time, in so highly bred a girl, a defenceless exposure was unaccountable. Half a nod and the shade of a smile would have been the proper course; and her going along on the road to the valley seemed to say it might easily have been taken; except that there had evidently been a bit of a scene.

Potts ranked Henrietta's beauty far above her cousin Livia's. He was therefore personally offended by her disregard of him, and her bit of a scene with the fellow carrying her off did him injury on behalf of his friend Fleetwood. He dismissed Woodseer curtly. Thirsting more to gossip than to drink, he took a moody draught of beer at the inn, and by the aid of a conveyance, 'hastily built of rotten planks to serve his needs, and drawn by a horse of the old wars,' as he reported on his arrival at Baden, reached that home of the maltreated innocents twenty minutes before the countess and her party were to start for lunch up the Lichtenthal. Naturally, he was abused for letting his bird fly: but as he was shaven, refreshed, and in clean linen, he could pull his shirt-cuffs and take seat at his breakfast-table with equanimity while Abrane denounced him.

'I'll bet you the fellow's luck has gone,' said Potts. 'He's no new hand and you don't think him so either,

Fleet. I've looked into the fellow's eye and seen a leery old badger at the bottom of it. Talks vile stuff. However, perhaps I didn't drive out on that sweltering Carlsruhe road for nothing.'

He screwed a look at the earl, who sent Abrane to carry a message and heard the story Potts had to tell.

'Henrietta Fakenham! no mistake about her; driving out from a pothouse; man beside her, military man; might be a German. And, if you please, quite unacquainted with your humble servant, though we were as close as you to me. Something went wrong in that pothouse. Red eyes. There had been a scene, one could swear. Behind the lady another carriage, and her maid. Never saw the girl before, and sets to bowing and smirking at me, as if I was the fellow of all others! Comical. I made sure they were bound for this place. They were on the Strasburg road. No sign of them?'

'You speak to me?' said Fleetwood.

Potts muttered. He had put his foot into it.

'You have a bad habit of speaking to yourself,' Fleetwood remarked, and left him. He suffered from the rustics he had to deal with among his class, and it was not needed that he should thunder at them to make his wrath felt.

Livia swam in, asking: 'What has come to Russett? He passed me in one of his black fits.'

The tale of the Carlsruhe road was repeated by Potts. She reproved him. 'How could you choose Russett for such a report as that! The admiral was on the road behind. Henrietta—you 're sure it was she? German girls have much the same colouring. The gentleman

with her must have been one of the Court equerries. They were driving to some château or battlefield the admiral wanted to inspect. Good-looking man? Military man?'

'Oh! the man! pretty fair, I dare say,' Potts rejoined. 'If it wasn't Henrietta Fakenham, I see with the back of my head. German girl! The maid was a German girl.'

'That may well be,' said Livia.

She conceived the news to be of sufficient importance for her to countermand the drive up the Lichtenthal, and take the Carlsruhe road instead; for Henrietta was weak, and Chillon Kirby an arch-plotter, and pleader too, one of the desperate lovers. He was outstaying his leave of absence already, she believed; he had to be in England. If he feared to lose Henrietta, he would not hesitate to carry her off. Livia knew him, and knew the power of his pleading with a firmer woman than Henrietta.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRISONER OF HIS WORD

Nothing to rouse alarm was discovered at Carlsruhe. Livia's fair cousin was there with the red-haired gaunt girl of the mountains; and it was frankly stated by Henrietta, that she had accompanied the girl a certain distance along the Strasburg road, for her to see the last of her brother Chillon on his way to England. Livia was not the woman to push inquiries. On that

subject, she merely said, as soon as they were alone together: 'You seem to have had the lion's share of the parting.'

'Yes, we passed Mr. Chumley Potts,' was Henrietta's immediate answer; and her reference to him disarmed Livia.

They smiled at his name transiently, but in agreement: the tattler-spout of their set was a fatal person to encounter, and each deemed the sudden apparition of him in the very early morning along the Carlsruhe road rather magical.

'You place particular confidence in Russett's fidelity to his word, Riette—as you have been hearing yourself called. You should be serious by this time. Russett won't bear much more. I counted on the night of the Ball for the grand effect. You will extinguish every woman there—and if he is absent?'

'I shall excuse him.'

'You are not in a position to be so charitable. You ought to know your position, and yourself too, a little better than you do. How could you endure poverty? Chillon Kirby stands in his uniform, and all 's told. He can manœuvre, we know. He got the admiral away to take him to those reviews cleverly. But is he thinking of your interests when he does it? He requires twenty years of active service to give you a roof to your head. I hate such allusions. But look for a moment at your character: you must have ordinary luxuries and pleasures, and if you were to find yourself grinding against common necessities — imagine it! Russett is quite manageable. He is, trust me! He is a gentleman; he has more ability than most young men: he can do anything he sets his mind to do. He has his great

estates and fortune all in his own hands. We call him eccentric. He is only young, with a lot of power. Add, he 's in love, and some one distracts him. Not love, do you say?—You look it. He worships. He has no chance given him to show himself at his best. Perhaps he is off again now. Will you bet me he is not?'

'I should incline to make the bet, if I betted,' said Henrietta. 'His pride is in his word, and supposing he 's in love, it 's with his pride, which never quits him.'

'There 's firmness in a man who has pride of that kind. You must let me take you back to Baden. I hold to having you with me to-day. You must make an appearance there. The admiral will bring us his Miss Kirby to-morrow, if he is bound to remain here to-night. There 's no harm in his bachelor dinners. I suspect his twinges of gout come of the prospect of affairs when he lands in England. Remember our bill with Madame Clémence. There won't be the ghost of a bank-note for me if Russett quits the field; we shall all be stranded.'

Henrietta inquired: 'Does it depend on my going with you to-day?'

'Consider, that he is now fancying a thousand things. We won't talk of the road to Paris.'

A shot of colour swept over Henrietta.

'I will speak to papa:—if he can let me go. He has taken to Miss Kirby.'

'Does she taste well?'

Henrietta debated. 'It 's impossible to dislike her. Oh! she is wild! She knows absolutely nothing of the world. She can do everything we can't—or don't dare to try. Men would like her. Papa 's beginning to dote. He says she would have made a first-rate soldier.

She fears blood as little as her morning cup of milk. One of the orderlies fell rather badly from a frightened horse close by our carriage. She was out in a moment and had his head on her lap, calling to papa to keep the carriage fast and block the way of the squadron, for the man's leg was hurt. I really thought we were lost. At these manœuvres anything may happen, at any instant. Papa will follow the horse-artillery. You know his vanity to be a military quite as much as a naval commander—like the Greeks and Romans, he says. We took the bruised man into our carriage and drove him to camp, Carinthia nursing him on the way.'

'Carinthia! She 's well fitted with her name. What with her name and her hair and her build and her singular style of attire, one wonders at her coming into civilized parts. She 's utterly unlike Chillon.'

Henrietta reddened at the mention of one of her own thoughts in the contrasting of the pair.

They had their points of likeness, she said.

It did not concern Livia to hear what these were. Back to Baden, with means to procure the pleasant shocks of the galvanic battery there, was her thought; for she had a fear of the earl's having again departed in a huff at Henrietta's behaviour.

The admiral consented that his daughter should go, as soon as he heard that Miss Kirby was to stay. He had when a young man met her famous father; he vowed she was the Old Buccaneer young again in petticoats and had made prize of an English man-of-war by storm; all the profit, however, being his. This he proved with a courteous clasp of the girl and a show of the salute on her cheek, which he presumed to take at the night's farewell. 'She 's my tonic,' he pro-

claimed heartily. She seemed to Livia somewhat unstrung and toneless. The separation from her brother in the morning might account for it. And a man of the admiral's age could be excused if he exalted the girl. Senility, like infancy, is fond of plain outlines for the laying on of its paints. The girl had rugged brows, a short nose, red hair; no young man would look at her twice. She was utterly unlike Chillon! Kissing her hand to Henrietta from the steps of the hotel, the girl's face improved.

Livia's little squire, Sir Meeson Corby, ejaculated as they were driving down the main street, 'Fleetwood's tramp! There he goes. Now see, Miss Fakenham, the kind of object Lord Fleetwood picks up and calls friend!—calls that object friend! . . . But, what? He has been to a tailor and a barber!'

'Stop the coachman. Run, tell Mr. Woodseer I wish him to join us,' Livia said, and Sir Meeson had to thank his tramp for a second indignity. He protested, he simulated remonstrance,—he had to go, really feeling a sickness.

The singular-looking person, whose necessities or sense of the decencies had, unknown to himself and to the others, put them all in motion that day, swung round listening to the challenge to arms, as the puffy little man's delivery of the countess's message sounded. He was respectably clad, he thought, in the relief of his escape from the suit of clothes discarded, and he silently followed Sir Meeson's trot to the carriage. 'Should have mistaken you for a German to-day, sir,' the latter said, and trotted on.

'A stout one,' Woodseer replied, with his happy indifference to his exterior.

His dark lady's eyes were kindly overlooking, like the heavens. Her fair cousin, to whom he bowed, awakened him to a perception of the spectacle causing the slight, quick arrest of her look, in an astonishment not unlike the hiccup in speech, while her act of courtesy proceeded. At once he was conscious of the price he paid for respectability, and saw the Teuton skin on the slim Cambrian, baggy at shoulders, baggy at seat, pinched at the knees, short at the heels, showing outrageously every spot where he ought to have been bigger or smaller. How accept or how reject the invitation to drive in such company to Baden!

'You 're decided enough, sir, in your play, they tell me,' the vindictive little baronet commented on his hesitation, and Woodseer sprang to the proffered vacant place. But he had to speak of his fly waiting for him at the steps of a certain hotel.

'Best hotel in the town!' Sir Meeson exclaimed pointedly to Henrietta, reading her constraint with this comical object before her. It was the admiral's hotel they stopped at.

'Be so good as to step down and tell the admiral he is to bring Madame Clémence in his carriage to-morrow; and on your way, you will dismiss Mr. Woodseer's fly,' Livia mildly addressed her squire. He stared: again he had to go, muttering: 'That nondescript's footman!' and his mischance in being checked and crossed and humiliated perpetually by a dirty-fisted vagabond impostor astounded him. He sent the flyman to the carriage for orders.

Admiral Fakenham and Carinthia descended. Sir Meeson heard her cry out: 'It is you!' and up stood the pretentious lout in the German sack, affecting the

graces of a born gentleman fresh from Paris,—bowing, smirking, excusing himself for something; and he jumped down to the young lady, he talked intimately with her, with a joker's air; he roused the admiral to an exchange of jokes, and the countess and Miss Fakenham more than smiled; evidently at his remarks, unobservant of the preposterous figure he cut. Sir Meeson Corby had intimations of the disintegration of his country if a patent tramp burlesquing in those clothes could be permitted to amuse English ladies of high station, quite at home with them. Among the signs of England's downfall, this was decidedly one. What to think of the admiral's favourite when, having his arm paternally on her shoulder, she gave the tramp her hand at parting, and then blushed! All that the ladies had to say about it was, that a spread of colour rather went to change the character of her face.

Carinthia had given Woodseer her hand and reddened under the recollection of Chillon's words to her as they mounted the rise of the narrow vale, after leaving the lame gentleman to his tobacco on the grass below the rocks. Her brother might have counselled her wisely and was to be obeyed. Only, the great pleasure in seeing the gentleman again inspired gratitude: he brought the scene to her; and it was alive, it chatted and it beckoned; it neighboured her home; she had passed it on her walk away from her home; the gentleman was her link to the mountain paths; he was just outside an association with her father and mother. At least, her thinking of them led to him, he to them. Now she had lost Chillon, no one was near to do so much. Besides, Chillon loved Henrietta; he was her own. His heart was hers and his mind his country's. This gentleman

loved the mountains; the sight of him breathed mountain air. To see him next day was her anticipation: for it would be at the skirts of hilly forest land, where pine-trees are a noble family, different from the dusty firs of the weariful plains, which had tired her eyes of late.

Baden was her first peep at the edges of the world since she had grown to be a young woman. She had but a faint idea of the significance of gambling. The brilliant lights, the band music, the sitting groups and company of promenaders were novelties; the Ball of the ensuing night at the Schloss would be a wonder, she acknowledged in response to Henrietta, who was trying to understand her; and she admired her ball-dress, she said, looking unintelligently when she heard that she would be guilty of slaying numbers of gentlemen before the night was over. Madame Clémence thought her chances in that respect as good as any other young lady's, if only she could be got to feel interested. But at a word of the pine forest, and saying she intended to climb the hills early with the light in the morning, a pointed eagerness flushed Carinthia, the cold engraving became a picture of colour.

She was out with the earliest light. Yesterday's parting between Chillon and Henrietta had taught her to know some little about love; and if her voice had been heeded by Chillon's beloved, it would not have been a parting. Her only success was to bring a flood of tears from Henrietta. The tears at least assured her that her brother's beautiful girl had no love for the other one,—the young nobleman of the great wealth, who was to be at the Ball, and had 'gone flying,' Admiral Fakenham shrugged to say; for Lord Fleetwood was nowhere seen.

The much talk of him on the promenade overnight fetched his name to her thoughts; he scarcely touched a mind that her father filled when she was once again breathing early morning air among the stems of climbing pines, broken alleys of the low-sweeping spruce branches and the bare, straight shafts carrying their heads high in the march upward. Her old father was arch-priest of such forest land, always recoverable to her there. The suggestion of mountains was enough to make her mind play, and her old father and she were aware of one another without conversing in speech. He pointed at things to observe; he shared her satisfied hunger for the solitudes of the dumb and growing and wild sweet-smelling. He would not let a sorrowful thought backward or an apprehensive idea forward disturb the scene. A half-uprooted pine-tree stem propped mid-fall by standing comrades, and the downy drop to ground and muted scurry up the bark of long-brush squirrels, cocktail on the wary watch, were noticed by him as well as by her; even the rotting timber drift, bark and cones on the yellow pine needles, and the tortuous dwarf chestnut pushing level out, with a strain of the head up, from a crevice of mossed rock, among ivy and ferns; he saw what his girl saw. Power of heart was her conjuring magician.

She climbed to the rock-slabs above. This was too easily done. The poor bit of effort excited her frame to desire a spice of danger, her walk was towering in the physical contempt of a mountain girl for petty lowland obstructions. And it was just then, by the chance of things—by the direction of events, as Dame Gossip believes it to be—while colour, expression, and her proud stature marked her from her sex, that a

gentleman, who was no other than Lord Fleetwood, passed Carinthia, coming out of the deeper pine forest.

Some distance on, round a bend of the path, she was tempted to adventure by a projected forked head of a sturdy, blunted and twisted little rock-fostered forest tree pushing horizontally for growth about thirty feet above the lower ground. She looked on it, and took a step down to the stem soon after. Fleetwood had turned and followed, merely for the final curious peep at an unexpected vision; he had noticed the singular shoot of thick timber from the rock, and the form of the goose-neck it rose to, the sprout of branches off the bill in the shape of a crest. And now a shameful spasm of terror seized him at sight of a girl doing what he would have dreaded to attempt. She footed coolly, well-balanced, upright. She seated herself.

And there let her be. She was a German girl, apparently. She had an air of breeding, something more than breeding. German families of the nobles give out, here and there, as the Great War showed examples of, intrepid young women, who have the sharp lines of character to render them independent of the graces. But, if a young woman out alone in the woods was hardly to be counted among the well-born, she held rank above them. Her face and bearing might really be taken to symbolize the forest life. She was as individual a representative as the Tragic and Comic masks, and should be got to stand between them for sign of the naturally straight-growing untrained, a noble daughter of the woods.

Not comparable to Henrietta in feminine beauty, she was on an upper plateau, where questions as to beauty

are answered by other than the shallow aspect of a girl. But would Henrietta eclipse her if they were side by side? Fleetwood recalled the strange girl's face. There was in it a savage poignancy in serenity unexampled among women—or modern women. One might imagine an apotheosis of a militant young princess of Goths or Vandals, the glow of blessedness awakening her martial ardours through the languor of the grave:—Woodseer would comprehend and hit on the exact image to portray her in a moment, Fleetwood thought, and longed for that fellow.

He walked hurriedly back to the stunted rock tree. The damsel had vanished. He glanced below. She had not fallen. He longed to tell Woodseer he had seen a sort of Carinthia—a sister, cousin, one of the family. A single glimpse of her had raised him out of his grovelling perturbations, cooled and strengthened him, more than diverting the course of the poison Henrietta infused, and to which it disgraced him to be so subject. He took love unmanfully; the passion struck at his weakness; in wrath at the humiliation, if only to revenge himself for that, he could be fiendish; he knew it, and loathed the desired fair creature who caused and exposed to him these cracks in his nature, whence there came a brimstone stench of the infernal pits. And he was made for better. Of this he was right well assured. Superior to station and to wealth, to all mundane advantages, he was the puppet of a florid puppet girl; and he had slept at the small inn of a village hard by, because it was intolerable to him to see the face that had been tearful over her lover's departure, and hear her praises of the man she trusted to keep his word, however grievously she wounded him.

He was the prisoner of his word;—rather like the donkeys known as married men: rather more honourable than most of them. He had to be present at the ball at the Schloss and behold his loathed Henrietta, suffer torture of chains to the rack, by reason of his having promised the bitter coquette he would be there. So hellish did the misery seem to him, that he was relieved by the prospect of lying a whole day long in loneliness with the sunshine of the woods, occasionally conjuring up the antidote face of the wood-sprite before he was to undergo it. But, as he was not by nature a dreamer, only dreamed of the luxury of being one, he soon looked back with loathing on a notion of relief to come from the state of ruminating animal, and jumped up and shook off another of men's delusions—that they can, if they have the heart to suffer pain, deaden it with any semi-poetical devices, similar to those which Rufus Abrane's 'fiddler fellow' practised and was able to carry out because he had no blood. The spite of a present entire opposition to Woodseer's professed views made him exult in the thought, that the mouther of sentences was likely to be at work stultifying them and himself in the halls there below during the day. An imp of mischief offered consolatory sport in those halls of the Black Goddess; already he regarded his recent subservience to the conceited and tripped peripatetic philosopher as among the ignominies he had cast away on his road to a general contempt; which is the position of a supreme elevation for particularly sensitive young men.

Pleasure in the scenery had gone, and the wood-sprite was a flitted vapour; he longed to be below there, observing Abrane and Potts and the philosopher con-

founded, and the legible placidity of Countess Livia. Nevertheless, he hung aloft, feeding where he could, impatient of the solitudes, till night, when, according to his guess, the ladies were at their robing.

Half the fun was over: but the tale of it, narrated in turn by Abrane and his Chummy Potts on the promenade, was a very good half. The fiddler had played for the countess and handed her back her empty purse, with a bow and a pretty speech. Nothing had been seen of him since. He had lost all his own money besides. 'As of course he would,' said Potts. 'A fellow calculating the chances catches at a knife in the air.'

'Every franc-piece he had!' cried Abrane. 'And how could the jackass expect to keep his luck! Flings off his old suit and comes back here with a rig of German bags—you never saw such a figure!—Shoreditch Jew's holiday!—why, of course, the luck wouldn't stand that.'

They confessed ruefully to having backed him a certain distance, notwithstanding. 'He took it so coolly, just as if paying for goods across a counter.'

'And he had something to bear, Braney, when you fell on him,' said Potts, and murmured aside: 'He can be smartish. Hears me call Braney Rufus, and says he, like a fellow—chin on his fiddle—"Captain Mountain, Rufus Mus'. Not bad, for a counter."'

Fleetwood glanced round: he could have wrung Woodseer's hand. He saw young Cressett instead, and hailed him: 'Here you are, my gallant! You shall flash your maiden sword to-night. When I was under your age by a long count, I dealt sanctimoniousness a flick o' the cheek, and you shall, and let 'em know

you 're a man. Come and have your first boar-hunt along with me. Petticoats be hanged.'

The boy showed some recollection of the lectures of his queen, but he had not the vocables for resistance to an imperative senior at work upon sneaking inclinations. 'Promised Lady F.!—do you hear him?' Fleetwood called to the couple behind; and as gamblers must needs be parasites, manly were the things they spoke to invigorate the youthful plunger and second the whim of their paymaster.

At half-past eleven, the prisoner of his word entered under the Schloss portico, having vowed to himself on the way, that he would satisfy the formulas to gain release by a deferential bow to the great personages, and straightway slip out into the heavenly starlight, thence down among the jolly Parisian and Viennese Bacchanals.

CHAPTER XII

HENRIETTA'S LETTER TREATING OF THE GREAT EVENT

By the first light of an autumn morning, Henrietta sat at her travelling-desk, to shoot a spark into the breast of her lover with the story of the great event of the night. For there had been one, one of our biggest, beyond all tongues and trumpets and possible anticipations. Wonder at it hammered on incredulity as she wrote it for fact, and in writing had vision of her lover's eyes over the page.

'Monsieur Du Lac!

'Grey Dawn. You are greeted. This, if you have been tardy on the journey home, will follow close on the heels of the prowest, I believe truest, of knights, and bear perhaps to his quick mind some help to the solution he dropped a hint of seeking.

'The Ball in every way a success. Grand Duke and Duchess perfect in courtesy, not a sign of the German *morgue*. Livia splendid. Compared to Day and Night. But the Night eclipses the Day. A summer sea of dancing. Who, think you, eclipsed those two?

'I tell you the very truth when I say your Carinthia did. If you had seen her,—the "poor dear girl" you sigh to speak of,—with the doleful outlook on her fortunes: "portionless, unattractive!" Chillon, she was magical! You cannot ever have seen her irradiated with happiness. Her pleasure in the happiness of all around her was part of the charm. One should be a poet to describe her. It would task an artist to paint the rose-crystal she became when threading her way through the groups to be presented. This is not meant to say that she looked beautiful. It was the something above beauty—more unique and impressive —like the Alpine snow-cloak towering up from the flowery slopes you know so well and I a little.

'You choose to think, is it Riette who noticed my simple sister so closely before . . . ? for I suppose you to be reading this letter a second time and reflecting as you read. In the first place, acquaintance with her has revealed that she is not the simple person—only in her manner. Under the beams of subsequent events, it is true I see her more picturesquely. But I noticed also just a suspicion of the "grenadier" stride

when she was on the march to make her curtsey. But Livia had no cause for chills and quivers. She was not the very strange bird requiring explanatory excuses; she dances excellently, and after the first dance, I noticed she minced her steps in the walk with her partner. She catches the tone readily. If not the image of her mother, she has inherited her mother's bent for the graces; she needs but a small amount of practice.

'Take my assurance of that; and you know who has critical eyes. Your anxiety may rest; she is equal to any station.

'As expected by me, my Lord Tyrant appeared, though late, near midnight. I saw him bowing to the Ducal party. Papa had led your "simple sister" there. Next I saw the Tyrant and Carinthia conversing. Soon they were dancing together, talking interestedly, like cheerful comrades. Whatever his faults, he has the merit of being a man of his word. He said he would come, he did not wish to come, and he came.

'His word binds him—I hope not fatally; irrevocably, it certainly does. There is charm of character in that. His autocrat airs can be forgiven to a man who so profoundly respects his word.

'It occurred during their third dance. Your Riette was not in the quadrille. O but she was a snubbed young woman last night! I refrain—the examples are too minute for quotation.

'A little later and he had vanished. Carinthia Kirby may already be written Countess of Fleetwood! His hand was offered and hers demanded in plain terms. Her brother would not be so astounded if he had seen the brilliant creature she was—is, I could

say; for when she left me here, to go to her bed, she still wore the "afterglow." She tripped over to me in the ball-room to tell me. I might doubt, she had no doubt whatever. I fancied he had subjected her to some degree of trifling. He was in a mood. His moods are known to me. But no, he was precise; her report of him strikes the ear as credible, in spite of the marvel it insists on our swallowing.

'"Lord Fleetwood has asked me to marry him." Neither assurance nor bashfulness; newspaper print; and an undoubting air of contentment.

'Imagine me hearing it.

'"To be his wife?"

'"He said wife."

'"And you replied?"

'"I said I would."

'"Tell me all?"

'"He said we were plighted."

'Now, "wife" is one of the words he abhors; and he loathes the hearing of a girl as "engaged." However, "plighted" carried a likeness.

'I pressed her: "My dear Carinthia, you thought him in earnest?"

'"He was."

'"How do you judge?"

'"By his look when he spoke."

'"Not by his words?"

'"I repeat them to you."

'She has repeated them to me here in my bedroom. There is no variation. She remembers every syllable. He went so far as to urge her to say whether she would as willingly utter consent if they were in a church and a clergyman at the altar-rails.

'That was like him.

'She made answer: "Wherever it may be, I am bound, if I say yes."

'She then adds: "He told me he joined hands with me."

'"Did he repeat the word 'wife'?"

'"He said it twice."

'I transcribe verbatim scrupulously. There cannot be an error, Chillon. It seems to show, that he has embraced the serious meaning of the word—or seriously embraced the meaning, reads better. I have seen his lips form "wife."

'But why wonder so staringly? They both love the mountains. Both are wildish. She was looking superb. And he had seen her do a daring thing on the rocks on the heights in the early morning, when she was out by herself, unaware of a spectator, he not knowing who she was;—the Fates had arranged it so. That was why he took to her so rapidly. So he told her. She likes being admired. The preparation for the meeting does really seem "under direction." She likes him too, I do think. Between her repetitions of his compliments, she praised his tone of voice, his features. She is ready to have the fullest faith in the sincerity of his offer; speaks without any impatience for the fulfilment. If it should happen, what a change in the fortunes of a girl!—of more than one, possibly.

'Now I must rest—"eyelids fall." It will be with a heart galloping. No rest for me till this letter flies. Good morning is my good night to you, in a world that has turned over.'

Henrietta resumes:—

'Livia will not hear of it, calls up all her pretty languor to put it aside. It is the same to day as last night. "Why mention Russett's nonsense to me?" Carinthia is as quietly circumstantial as at first. She and the Tyrant talked of her native home. Very desirous to see it! means to build a mansion there! "He said it must be the most romantic place on earth."

'I suppose I slept. I woke with my last line to you on my lips, and the great news thundering. He named Esslemont and his favourite—always uninhabited—Cader Argau. She speaks them correctly. She has an unfailing memory. The point is, that it is a memory.

'Do not forget also—Livia is affected by her distaste—that he is a gentleman. He plays with his nobility. With his reputation of gentleman, he has never been known to play. You will understand the slightly hypocritical air—it is not of sufficient importance for it to be alluded to in papa's presence—I put on with her.

'Yes, I danced nearly all the dances. One, a princeling in scarlet uniform, appearing fresh from under earth, Prussian: a weighty young Graf in green, between sage and bottle, who seemed to have run off a tree in the forest, and was trimmed with silver like dew-drops: one in your Austrian white, *dragon de Bohème*, if I caught his French rightly. Others as well, a list. They have the accomplishment. They are drilled in it young, as girls are, and so few Englishmen —even English officers. How it may be for campaigning, you can pronounce; but for dancing, the *pantalon collant* is the perfect uniform. Your critical Henrietta

had not to complain of her partners, in the absence of the one.

'I shall be haunted by visions of Chillon's amazement until I hear or we meet. I serve for Carinthia's mouthpiece, she cannot write it, she says. It would be related in two copybook lines, if at all.

'The amazement over London! The jewel hand of the kingdom gone in a flash, to "a raw mountain girl," as will be said. I can hear Lady Endor, Lady Eldritch, Lady Cowry. The reasonable woman should be Lady Arpington. I have heard her speak of your mother, seen by her when she was in frocks.

'Enter the "plighted." Poor Livia! to be made a dowager of by any but a damsel of the family. She may well ridicule "that nonsense of Russett's last night"! Carinthia kisses, embraces, her brother. I am to say: "What Henrietta tells you is true, Chillon." She is contented though she has not seen him again and has not the look of expecting to see him. She still wears the kind of afterglow.

'Chillon's Viennese waltz was played by the band:— played a second time, special request, conveyed to the leader by Prince Ferdinand. True, most true, she longs to be home across the water. But be it admitted, that to any one loving colour, music, chivalry, the Island of Drab is an exile. Imagine, then, the strange magnetism drawing her there! Could warmer proof be given?

'Adieu. Livia's "arch-plotter" will weigh the letter he reads to the smallest fraction of a fraction before he moves a step.

'I could leave it and come to it again and add and add. I foresee in Livia's mind a dread of the aforesaid

"arch," and an interdict. So the letter must be closed, sealed and into the box, with the hand I still call mine, though I should doubt my right if it were contested fervently. I am singing the waltz.

'Adieu,

'Ever and beyond it,

'Your obedient Queen,

'HENRIETTA.

'*P.S.*—My Lord Tyrant has departed—as on other occasions. The prisoner of his word is sure to take his airing before he presents himself to redeem it. His valet is left to pay bills, fortunately for Livia. She entrusted her purse yesterday to a man picked up on the road by my lord, that he might play for her. Captain Abrane assured her he had a star, and Mr. Potts thought him a *rusé compère*, an adept of those dreadful gambling-tables. Why will she continue to play! The purse was returned to her, without so much as a piece of silver in it; the man has flown. Sir M. Corby says, he is a man whose hands betray him—or did to Sir M.; expects to see him one day on the wrong side of the criminal bar. He struck me as not being worse than absurd. He was, in any case, an unfit companion, and our C. would help to rescue the Eccentric from such complicating associates. I see worlds of good she may do. Happily, he is no slave of the vice of gambling; so she would not suffer that anxiety. I wish it could be subjoined, that he has no malicious pleasure in misleading others. Livia is inconsolable over her pet, young Lord Cressett, whom he yesterday induced to "try his luck"—with the result. We leave, if bills are paid, in two days. Captain

Abrane and Mr. Potts left this afternoon; just enough to carry them home. Papa and your blissful sister out driving. Riette within her four walls and signing herself, 'The Prisoner of Chillon.'

CHAPTER XIII

AN IRRUPTION OF MISTRESS GOSSIP IN BREACH OF THE CONVENTION

'It is a dark land,' Carinthia said, on seeing our Island's lowered clouds in swift motion, without a break of their folds, above the sheer white cliffs.

—She said it, we know. That poor child Carinthia Jane, when first she beheld Old England's shores, tossing in the packet-boat on a wild Channel sea, did say it and think it, for it is in the family that she did; and no wonder that she should, the day being showery from the bed of the sun, after a frosty three days, at the close of autumn. We used to have an eye of our own for English weather before printed Meteorological Observations and Forecasts undertook to supplant the shepherd and the poacher, and the pilot with his worn brown leather telescope tucked beneath his arm. All three would have told you, that the end of a three days' frost in the late season of the year and the early, is likely to draw the warm winds from the Atlantic over Cornish Land's End and Lizard.

Quite by the chance of things, Carinthia Jane looked on the land of her father and mother for the first time under those conditions. There can be no harm in quoting her remark. Only—I have to say it—experi-

ence causes apprehension, that we are again to be delayed by descriptions, and an exposition of feelings; taken for granted, of course, in a serious narrative; which it really seems these moderns think designed for a frequent arrest of the actors in the story and a searching of the internal state of this one or that one of them: who is laid out stark naked and probed and expounded, like as in the celebrated picture by a great painter: and we, thirsting for events as we are, are to stop to enjoy a lecture on Anatomy. And all the while the windows of the lecture-room are rattling, if not the whole fabric shaking, with exterior occurrences or impatience for them to come to pass. Every explanation is sure to be offered by the course events may take; so do, in mercy, I say, let us bide for them.

She thought our Island all the darker because Henrietta had induced her to talk on the boat of her mountain home and her last morning there for the walk away with Chillon John. Soon it was to appear supernaturally bright, a very magician's cave for brilliancy.

Now, this had happened—and comment on it to yourselves, remembering always, that Chillon John was a lover, and a lover has his excuses, though they will not obviate the penalties he may incur; and dreadful they were. After reading Henrietta's letter to him, he rode out of his Canterbury quarters across the country to the borders of Sussex, where his uncle Lord Levellier lived, on the ridge of ironstone, near the wild land of a forest, Croridge the name of the place. Now, Chillon John knew his uncle was miserly, and dreaded the prospect of having to support a niece in the wretched establishment at Lekkatts, or, as it was popularly called, Leancats; you can understand why. But he managed

to assure himself he must in duty consult with the senior and chief member of his family on a subject of such importance as the proposal of marriage to his lordship's niece.

The consultation was short: 'You will leave it to me,' his uncle said: and we hear of business affairs between them, involving payment of moneys due to the young man; and how, whenever he touched on them, his uncle immediately fell back on the honour of the family and Carinthia Jane's reputation, her good name to be vindicated, and especially that there must be no delays, together with as close a reckoning as he could make of the value of Lord Fleetwood's estates in Kent and in Staffordshire and South Wales, and his house property in London.

'He will have means to support her,' said the old lord, shrugging as if at his own incapacity for that burden.

The two then went to the workshops beside a large pond, where there was an island bordered with birch trees and workmen's cottages near the main building; and that was an arsenal containing every kind of sword and lance and musket, rifle and fowling-piece and pistol, and more gunpowder than was, I believe, allowed by law. For they were engaged in inventing a new powder for howitzer shells, of tremendous explosive power.

Nothing further did either of them say concerning the marriage. Nor did Carinthia Jane hear any mention of Lord Fleetwood from her brother on the landing-place at Dover. She was taken to Admiral Baldwin Fakenham's house in Hampshire; and there she remained, the delight of his life, during two months,

patiently expecting and rebuking the unmaidenliness of her expectations, as honest young women in her position used to do. So did they sometimes wait for years; they have waited until they withered into their graves, like the vapours of a brief winter's day; a moving picture of a sex restrained by modesty in those purer times from the taking of one step forward unless inquired for.

Two months she waited in our 'dark land.' January arrived, and her brother. Henrietta communicated the news:—

'My Janey, you are asked by Lord Fleetwood whether it is your wish that he should marry you.'

Now, usually a well-born young woman's answer, if a willing one, is an example of weak translation. Here it was the heart's native tongue, without any roundabout, simple but direct.

'Oh, I will, I am ready, tell him.'

Remember, she was not speaking publicly.

Henrietta knew the man enough to be glad he did not hear. She herself would have felt a little shock on his behalf; only, that answer suited the scheme of the pair of lovers.

How far those two were innocent in not delivering the whole of Lord Fleetwood's message to Carinthia Jane through Lord Levellier, we are unable to learn. We may suspect the miserly nobleman of curtailing it for his purposes; and such is my idea. But the answer would have been the same, I am sure.

In consequence and straight away, Chillon John betakes him to Admiral Baldwin and informs him of Lord Fleetwood's proposal on the night at Baden, and renewal of it through the mouth of Lord Levellier, not

communicating, however (he may really not have known), the story of how it had been wrung from the earl by a surprise movement on the part of the one-armed old lord, who burst out on him in the street from the ambush of a Club-window, where he had been stationed every day for a fortnight, indefatigably to watch for the passing of the earl, as there seemed no other way to find him. They say, indeed, there was a scene, judging by the result, and it would have been an excellent scene for the stage; though the two noblemen were to all appearance politely exchanging their remarks. But the audience hearing what passes, appreciates the courteous restraint of an attitude so contrasting with their tempers. Behind the ostentation of civility, their words were daggers.

For it chanced, that the young earl, after a period of refuge at his Welsh castle, supposing, as he well might, that his latest mad freak of the proposal of his hand and title to the strange girl in a quadrille at a foreign castle had been forgotten by her, and the risks of annoyance on the subject had quite blown over, returned to town, happy in having done the penance for his impulsiveness, and got clean again—that is to say, struck off his fetters and escaped from importunities—the very morning of the day when Lord Levellier sprang upon him! It shows the old campaigner's shrewdness in guessing where his prey would come, and not putting him on his guard by a call at his house. Out of the window he looked for all the hours of light during an entire fortnight. 'In the service of my sister's child,' he said. 'To save him from the cost of maintaining her,' say his enemies. At any rate he did it.

He was likely to have done the worse which I suspect.

Now, the imparting of the wonderful news to Admiral Baldwin Fakenham was, we read, the whiff of a tropical squall to lay him on his beam ends. He could not but doubt; and his talk was like the sails of a big ship rattling to the first puff of wind. He had to believe; and then, we read, he was for hours like a vessel rolling in the trough of the sea. Of course he was a disappointed father. Naturally his glance at the loss to Henrietta of the greatest prize of the matrimonial market of all Europe and America was vexing and saddening. Then he woke up to think of the fortunes of his 'other girl,' as he named her, and cried: 'Crinny catches him!'

He cried it in glee and rubbed his hands.

So thereupon, standing before him, Chillon John, from whom he had the news, bent to him slightly, as his elegant manner was, and lengthened the admiral's chaps with another proposal; easy, deliberate, precise, quite the respectful bandit, if you please, determined on having his daughter by all means, only much preferring the legal, formal, and friendly. Upon that, in the moment of indecision, Henrietta enters, followed by Admiral Baldwin's heroine, his Crinny, whom he embraced and kissed, congratulated and kissed again. One sees the contrivance to soften him.

So it was done, down in that Hampshire household on the heights near the downs, whence you might behold, off a terra firma resembling a roll of billows, England's big battle-ships in line fronting the island; when they were a spectacle of beauty as well as power: which now they are no more, but will have to be, if they are both to float and to fight. For I have had quoted to me by a great admirer of the Old Buccaneer, one of the dark sayings in his MAXIMS FOR MEN, where Captain John

Peter Kirby commends his fellow-men to dissatisfaction with themselves *if they have not put an end to their enemy handsomely.* And he advises the copying of Nature in this; whose elements have always, he says, *a pretty, besides a thorough, style of doing it,* when they get the better of us; and the one by reason of the other. He instances the horse, the yacht, and chiefly the sword, for proof, that the handsomest is the most effective. And he prints large: 'UGLY IS ONLY HALF WAY TO A THING.' To an invention, I suppose he intends to say. But looking on our huge foundering sea-monsters and the disappearance of the unwieldy in Nature, and the countenances of criminals, who are, he bids us observe, *always in the long run beaten,* I seem to see a meaning our country might meditate on.

So, as I said, it was done; for Admiral Baldwin could refuse his Crinny nothing; as little as he would deny anything to himself, the heartiest of kindly hosts, fathers, friends. Carinthia Jane's grand good fortune covered that pit, the question of money, somehow, and was, we may conceive, a champagne wine in their reasoning faculties. The admiral was in debt, Henrietta had no heritage, Chillon John was the heir of a miserly uncle owing him sums and evading every application for them, yet they behaved as people who had the cup of golden wishes. Perhaps it was because Henrietta and her lover were so handsome a match as to make it seem to them and others they must marry; and as to character, her father could trust her to the man of her choice more readily than to the wealthy young nobleman; of whose discreetness he had not the highest opinion. He reconciled this view with his warm feeling for the Countess of Fleetwood to be, by saying: 'Crinny will tame him!'

His faith was in her dauntless bold spirit, not thinking of the animal she was to tame.

Countess Livia, after receiving Henrietta's letter of information, descended on them and thought them each and all a crazed set. Love, as a motive of action for a woman, she considered the female's lunacy and suicide. Men are born subject to it, happily, and thus the balance between the lordly half of creation and the frail is rectified. We women dress, and smile, sigh, if you like, to excite the malady. But if we are the fools to share it, we lose our chance; instead of the queens, we are the slaves, and instead of a life of pleasure, we pass from fever to fever at a tyrant's caprice: he does rightly in despising us. Ay, and many a worthy woman thinks the same. Educated in dependency as they are, they come to the idea of love to snatch at it for their weapon of the man's weakness. For which my lord calls them heartless, and poets are angry with them, rightly or wrongly.

It must, I fear, be admitted for a truth, that sorrow is the portion of young women who give the full measure of love to the engagement, marrying for love. At least, Countess Livia could declare subsequently she had foretold it and warned her cousin. Not another reflection do you hear from me, if I must pay forfeit of my privilege to hurry you on past descriptions of places and anatomy of character and impertinent talk about philosophy—in a story. When we are startled and offended by the insinuated tracing of principal incidents to a thread-bare spot in the nether garments of a man of no significance, I lose patience.

Henrietta's case was a secondary affair. What with her passion—it was nothing less—and her lover's

cunning arts, and her father's consent given, and in truth the look of the two together, the dissuasion of them from union was as likely to keep them apart as an exhortation addressed to magnet and needle. Countess Livia attacked Carinthia Jane and the admiral backing her. But the admiral, having given his consent to his daughter's marriage, in consequence of the earl's pledged word to 'his other girl,' had become a zealot for this marriage: and there was only not a grand altercation on the subject because Livia shunned annoyances. Alone with Carinthia Jane, as she reported to Henrietta, she spoke to a block, that shook a head and wore a thin smile and nursed its own idea of the better knowledge of Edward Russett, Earl of Fleetwood, gained in the run of a silly quadrille at a ball.

What is a young man's word to his partner in a quadrille!

Livia put the question, she put it twice rather sternly, and the girl came out with: 'Oh, he meant it!'

The nature, the pride, the shifty and furious moods of Lord Fleetwood were painted frightful to her.

She had conceived her own image of him.

Whether to set her down as an enamoured idiot or a creature not a whit less artful than her brother, was Countess Livia's debate. Her inclination was to misdoubt the daughter of the Old Buccaneer: she might be simple, at her age; and she certainly was ignorant; but she clung to her prize. Still the promise was extracted from her, that she would not worry the earl to fulfil the word she supposed him to mean in its full meaning.

The promise was unreluctantly yielded. No, she would not write. Admiral Fakenham, too, engaged to leave the matter to a man of honour.

Meanwhile, Chillon John had taken a journey to Lekkatts; following which, his uncle went to London. Lord Fleetwood heard that Miss Kirby kept him bound. He was again the fated prisoner of his word.

And following that, not so very long, there was the announcement of the marriage of Chillon John Kirby-Levellier, Lieutenant in the King's Own Hussars, and Henrietta, daughter of Admiral Baldwin Fakenham. A county newspaper paragraph was quoted for its eulogy of the Beauty of Hampshire—not too strong, those acquainted with her thought. Interest at Court obtained an advancement for the bridegroom: he was gazetted Captain during his honeymoon, and his prospects under his uncle's name were considered fair, though certain people said at the time, it was likely to be all he would get while old Lord Levellier of Leancats remained in the flesh.

Now, as it is good for those to tell who intend preserving their taste for romance and hate anatomical lectures, we never can come to the exact motives of any extraordinary piece of conduct on the part of man or woman. Girls are to read, and the study of a boy starts from the monkey. But no literary surgeon or chemist shall explain positively the cause of the behaviour of men and women in their relations together; and speaking to rescue my story, I say we must with due submission accept the facts. We are not a bit the worse for wondering at them. So it happened that Lord Fleetwood's reply to Lord Levellier's hammer—hammer by post and messenger at his door, one may

call it, on the subject of the celebration of the marriage of the young Crœsus and Carinthia Jane, in which there was demand for the fixing of a date forthwith, was despatched on the day when London had tidings of Henrietta Fakenham's wedding.

The letter, lost for many years, turned up in the hands of a Kentish auctioneer, selling it on behalf of a farm-serving man, who had it from Lord Levellier's cook and housemaid, among the things she brought him as her wifely portion after her master's death, and this she had not found saleable in her husband's village at her price, but she had got the habit of sticking to the scraps, being proud of hearing it said that she had skinned Leancats to some profit: and her expectation proved correct after her own demise, for her husband putting it up at the auction, our relative on the mother's side, Dr. Glossop, interested in the documents and particulars of the story as he was, had it knocked down to him, in contest with an agent of a London gentleman, going as high as two pounds ten shillings, for the sum of two pounds and fifteen shillings. Count the amount that makes for each word of a letter a marvel of brevity, considering the purport! But Dr. Glossop was right in saying he had it cheap. The value of that letter may now be multiplied by ten: nor for that sum would he part with it.

Thus it ran, I need not refer to it in Bundle No. 3:

'My Lord: I drive to your church-door on the fourteenth of the month at ten A.M., to keep my appointment with Miss C. J. Kirby, if I do not blunder the initials.

'Your lordship's obedient servant,

'Fleetwood.'

That letter will ever be a treasured family possession with us.

That letter was dated from Lord Fleetwood's Kentish mansion, Esslemont, the tenth of the month. He must have quitted London for Esslemont, for change of scene, for air, the moment after the news of Henrietta's marriage. Carinthia Jane received the summons without transmission of the letter from her uncle on the morning of the twelfth. It was a peremptory summons.

Unfortunately, Admiral Fakenham, a real knight and chevalier of those past times, would not let her mount the downs to have her farewell view of the big ships unaccompanied by him; and partly and largely in pure chivalry, no doubt; but her young idea of England's grandeur, as shown in her great vessels of war, thrilled him, too, and restored his youthful enthusiasm for his noble profession or made it effervesce. However it was, he rode beside her and rejoiced to hear the young girl's talk of her father as a captain of one of England's thunderers, and of the cruelty of that Admiralty to him: at which Admiral Baldwin laughed, but had not the heart to disagree with her, for he could belabour the Admiralty in season, cause or no cause. Altogether he much enjoyed the ride, notwithstanding intimations of the approach of 'his visitor,' as he called his attacks of gout.

Riding home, however, the couple passed through a heavy rainfall, and the next day, when he was to drive with the bride to Lekkatts, gout, the fiercest he had ever known, chained him fast to his bed. Such are the petty accidents affecting circumstances. They are the instruments of Destiny.

There he lay, protesting that the ceremony could not possibly be for the fourteenth, because Countess Livia had, he now remembered, written of her engagement to meet Russett on the night of that day at a ball at Mrs. Cowper Quillett's place, Canleys, lying south of the Surrey hills : a house famed for its gatherings of beautiful women ; whither Lord Fleetwood would be sure to engage to go, the admiral now said ; and it racked him like gout in his mind, and perhaps troubled his conscience about handing the girl to such a young man. But he was lying on his back, the posture for memory to play the fiend with us, as we read in the Book of Maxims of the Old Buccaneer. Admiral Baldwin wished heartily to be present at his Crinny's wedding 'to see her launched,' if wedding it was to be, and he vowed the date of the fourteenth, in Lord Levellier's announcement of it, must be an error and might be a month in advance, and ought to be. But it was sheer talking and raving for a solace to his disappointment or his anxiety. He had to let Carinthia Jane depart under the charge of his housekeeper, Mrs. Carthew, a staid excellent lady, poorly gifted with observation.

Her report of the performance of the ceremony at Croridge village church, a half mile from Lekkatts, was highly reassuring to the anxious old admiral still lying on his back with memory and gout at their fiend's play, and livid forecasts hovering. He had recollected that there had been no allusion in Lord Levellier's message to settlements or any lawyer's preliminaries, and he raged at himself for having to own it would have been the first of questions on behalf of his daughter.

'All passed off correctly,' Mrs. Carthew said. 'The

responses of the bride and bridegroom were particularly articulate.'

She was reserved upon the question of the hospitality of Lekkatts. The place had entertained her during her necessitated residence there, and honour forbade her to smile concordantly at the rosy admiral's mention of Leancats. She took occasion however, to praise the Earl of Fleetwood's 'eminently provident considerateness for his bride, inasmuch as he had packed a hamper in his vehicle,' which was a four-in-hand, driven by himself.

Admiral Baldwin inquired: 'Bride inside?'

He was informed: 'The Countess of Fleetwood sat on the box on the left of my lord.'

She had made no moan about the absence of bridesmaids.

'She appeared too profoundly happy to meditate an instant upon deficiencies.'

'How did the bridegroom behave?'

'Lord Fleetwood was very methodical. He is not, or was not, voluntarily a talker.'

'Blue coat, brass buttons, hot-house flower? old style or new?'

'His lordship wore a rather low beaver and a buttoned white overcoat, not out of harmony with the bride's plain travelling-dress.'

'Ah! he's a good whip, men say. Keeps first-rate stables, hacks, and bloods. Esslemont hard by will be the place for their honeymoon, I guess. And he's a lucky dog, if he knows his luck.'

So said Admiral Baldwin. He was proceeding to say more, for he had a prodigious opinion of the young countess and the benefit of her marriage to the

British race. As it concerned a healthy constitution and motherhood, Mrs. Carthew coughed and retired. Nor do I reprove either of them. The speculation and the decorum are equally commendable. Masculine ideas are one thing; but let feminine ever be feminine, or our civilization perishes.

At Croridge village church, then,—one of the smallest churches in the kingdom,—the ceremony was performed and duly witnessed, names written in the vestry book, the clergyman's fee, the clerk, and the pew-woman, paid by the bridegroom. And thus we see how a pair of lovers, blind with the one object of lovers in view; and a miserly uncle, all on edge to save himself the expense of supporting his niece; and an idolatrous old admiral, on his back with gout; conduced in turn and together to the marriage gradually exciting the world's wonder, till it eclipsed the story of the Old Buccaneer and Countess Fanny, which it caused to be discussed afresh.

Mrs. Carthew remembered Carinthia Jane's last maiden remark and her first bridal utterance. On the way, walking to the church of Croridge from Lekkatts, the girl said: 'Going on my feet, I feel I continue the mountain walk with my brother when we left our home.' And after leaving the church, about to mount the coach, she turned to Mrs. Carthew, saying, as she embraced her: 'A happy bride's kiss should bring some good fortune.' And looking down from her place on the top of the coach: 'Adieu, dear Mrs. Carthew. A day of glory it is to-day.'

She must actually have had it in her sight as a day of glory: and it was a day of the clouds off our rainy quarter, similar in every way to the day of her step-

ping on English soil and saying: 'It is a dark land.' For the heart is truly declared to be our colourist. A day having the gale in its breast, sweeping the whole country and bending the trees for the twigs to hiss like spray of the billows around our island, was a day of golden splendour to the young bride of the Earl of Fleetwood, though he scarcely addressed one syllable to her, and they sat side by side all but dumb, he like a coachman driving an unknown lady fare, on a morning after a night when his wife's tongue may have soured him for the sex.

CHAPTER XIV

A PENDANT OF THE FOREGOING

Mention has been omitted or forgotten by the worthy Dame, in her vagrant fowl's treatment of a story she cannot incubate, will not relinquish, and may ultimately addle, that the bridegroom, after walking with a disengaged arm from the little village church at Croridge to his coach and four at the cross of the roads to Lekkatts and the lowland, abruptly, and as one pursuing a deferential line of conduct he had prescribed to himself, asked his bride, what seat she would prefer.

He shouted: 'Ines!'

A person inside the coach appeared to be effectually roused.

The glass of the window dropped. The head of a man emerged. It was the head of one of the barge-faced men of the British Isles, broad, and battered flattish, with sentinel eyes.

In an instant the heavy-headed but not ill-looking fellow was nimble and jumped from the coach.

'Napping, my lord,' he said.

Heavy though the look of him might be, his feet were light; they flipped a bar of a hornpipe at a touch of the ground. Perhaps they were allowed to go with their instinct for the dance, that his master should have a sample of his wakefulness. He quenched a smirk and stood to take orders; clad in a flat blue cap, a brown overcoat, and knee-breeches, as the temporary bustle of his legs had revealed.

Fleetwood heard the young lady say: 'I would choose, if you please, to sit beside you.'

He gave a nod of enforced assent, glancing at the vacated box.

The man inquired: 'A knee and a back for the lady to mount up, my lord?'

'In!' was the smart command to him; and he popped in with the agility of his popping out.

Then Carinthia made reverence to the grey lean figure of her uncle and kissed Mrs. Carthew. She needed no help to mount the coach. Fleetwood's arm was rigidly extended, and he did not visibly wince when this foreign girl sprang to the first hand-grip on the coach and said: 'No, my husband, I can do it,' unaided, was implied.

Her stride from the axle of the wheel to the step higher would have been a graceful spectacle on Alpine crags.

Fleetwood swallowed that, too, though it conjured up a mocking recollection of the Baden woods, and an astonished wild donkey preparing himself for his harness. A sour relish of the irony in his present position sharpened him to devilish enjoyment of it, as

the finest form of loathing: on the principle that if we find ourselves consigned to the nether halls, we do well to dance drunkenly. He had cried for Romance—here it was!

He raised his hat to Mrs. Carthew and to Lord Levellier. Previous to the ceremony, the two noblemen had interchanged the short speech of mannered duellists punctiliously courteous in the opening act. Their civility was maintained at the termination of the deadly work. The old lord's bosom thanked the young one for not requiring entertainment and a repast; the young lord's thanked the old one for a strict military demeanour at an execution and the abstaining from any nonsensical talk over the affair.

A couple of liveried grooms at the horses' heads ran and sprang to the hinder seats as soon as their master had taken the reins. He sounded the whip caressingly: off those pretty trotters went.

Mrs. Carthew watched them, waving to the bride. She was on the present occasion less than usually an acute or a reflective observer, owing to her admiration of lordly state and masculine commandership; and her thought was: 'She has indeed made a brilliant marriage!'

The lady thought it, notwithstanding an eccentricity in the wedding ceremony, such as could not but be noticeable. But very wealthy noblemen were commonly, perhaps necessarily, eccentric, for thus they proved themselves egregious, which the world expected them to be.

Lord Levellier sounded loud eulogies of the illustrious driver's team. His meditation, as he subsequently stated to Chillon, was upon his vanquished antagonist's

dexterity, in so conducting matters, that he had to be taken at once, with naught of the customary preface and apology for taking to himself the young lady, of which a handsome settlement is the memorial.

We have to suppose, that the curious occupant of the coach inside aroused no curiosity in the pair of absorbed observers.

Speculations regarding the chances of a fall of rain followed the coach until it sank and the backs of the two liveried grooms closed the chapter of the wedding; introductory to the honeymoon at Esslemont, seven miles distant by road, to the right of Lekkatts. It was out of sight that the coach turned to the left, North-westward.

CHAPTER XV

OPENING STAGE OF THE HONEYMOON

A FAMOUS maxim in the book of the Old Buccaneer, treating of PRECAUTION, as '*The brave man's clean conscience*,' with sound counsel to the adventurous, has it:—

'*Then you sail away into the tornado, happy as a sealed bottle of ripe wine.*'

It should mean, that brave men entering the jaws of hurricanes are found to have cheerful hearts in them when they know they have done their best. But, touching the picture of happiness, conceive the bounteous Bacchic spirit in the devoutness of a Sophocles, and you find comparison neighbour closely between the

sealed wine-flask and the bride, who is being driven by her husband to the nest of the unknown on her marriage morn.

Seated beside him, with bosom at heave and shut mouth, in a strange land, travelling cloud-like, rushing like the shower-cloud to the vale, this Carinthia, suddenly wedded, passionately grateful for humbleness exalted, virginly sensible of treasures of love to give, resembled the inanimate and most inspiring; was mindless and inexpressive, past memory, beyond the hopes, a thing of the thrilled blood and skylark air, since she laid her hand in this young man's. His not speaking to her was accepted. Her blood rather than recollection revived their exchanges during the dance at Baden, for assurance that their likings were one, their aims rapturously one; that he was she, she he, the two hearts making one soul.

Could she give as much as he? It was hardly asked. If we feel we can give our breath of life, the strength of the feeling fully answers. It bubbles perpetually from the depth like a well-spring in tumult. Two hearts that make one soul do not separately count their gifts.

For the rest, her hunger to admire disposed her to an absorbing sentience of his acts; the trifles, gestures, manner of this and that; which were seized as they flew, and swiftly assimilated to stamp his personality. Driving was the piece of skill she could not do. Her husband's mastery of the reins endowed him with the beauty of those harmonious trotters he guided and kept to their pace; and the humming rush of the pace, the smooth torrent of the brown heath-knolls and reddish pits and hedge-lines and grass-flats and copses pouring the counter-way of her advance, belonged to his wizardry.

The bearing of her onward was her abandonment to him. Delicious as mountain air, the wind sang; it had a song of many voices. Quite as much as on the mountains, there was the keen, the blissful, nerve-knotting catch of the presence of danger in the steep descents, taken as if swallowed, without swerve or check. She was in her husband's hands. At times, at the pitch of a rapid shelving, that was like a fall, her heart went down; and at the next throb exalted before it rose, not reasoning why;—her confidence was in him; she was his comrade whatever chanced. Up over the mountain-peaks she had known edged moments, little heeded in their passage, when life is poised as a crystal pitcher on the head, in peril of a step. Then she had been dependent on herself. Now she had the joy of trusting to her husband.

His hard leftward eye had view of her askant, if he cared to see how she bore the trial; and so relentlessly did he take the slopes, that the man inside pushed out an inquiring pate, the two grooms tightened arms across their chests. Her face was calmly set, wakeful, but unwrinkled: the creature did not count among timid girls —or among civilized. She had got what she wanted from her madman—mad in his impulses, mad in his reading of honour. She was the sister of Henrietta's husband. Henrietta bore the name she had quitted. Could madness go beyond the marrying of the creature? He chafed at her containment, at her courage, her silence, her withholding the brazen or the fawnish look-up, either of which he would have hated.

He, however, was dragged to look down. Neither Gorgon nor Venus, nor a mingling of them, she had the chasm of the face, recalling the face of his bondage,

seen first that night at Baden. It recalled and it was not the face; it was the skull of the face, or the flesh of the spirit. Occasionally she looked, for a twinkle or two, the creature or vision she had been, as if to mock by reminding him. She was the abhorred delusion, who captured him by his nerves, ensnared his word—the doing of a foul witch. How had it leapt from his mouth? She must have worked for it. The word spoken —she must have known it—he was bound, or the detested Henrietta would have said: Not even true to his word!

To see her now, this girl, insisting to share his name, for a slip of his tongue, despite the warning sent her through her uncle, had that face much as a leaden winter landscape pretends to be the country radiant in colour. She belonged to the order of the variable animals—a woman indeed!—womanish enough in that. There are men who love women—the idea of woman. Woman is their shepherdess of sheep. He loved freedom, loathed the subjection of a partnership; could undergo it only in adoration of an ineffable splendour. He had stepped to the altar fancying she might keep to her part of the contract by appearing the miracle that subdued him. Seen by light of day, this bitter object beside him was a witch without her spells; that is, the skeleton of the seductive, ghastliest among horrors and ironies. Let her have the credit of doing her work thoroughly before the exposure. She had done it. She might have helped—such was the stipulation of his mad freak in consenting to the bondage—yes, she might have helped to soften the sting of his wound. She was beside him bearing his name, for the perpetual pouring of an acid on the wound that vile Henrietta—poisoned honey of a girl!—had dealt.

He glanced down at his possession:—heaven and the yawning pit were the contrast! Poisoned honey is after all honey while you eat it. Here there was nothing but a rocky bowl of emptiness. And who was she? She was the sister of Henrietta's husband. He was expected to embrace the sister of Henrietta's husband. Those two were on their bridal tour.

This creature was also the daughter of an ancient impostor and desperado called the Old Buccaneer; a distinguished member of the family of the Lincolnshire Kirbys, boasting a present representative grimly acquitted, men said, on a trial for murder. An eminent alliance! Society considered the Earl of Fleetwood wildish, though he could manage his affairs. He and his lawyers had them under strict control. How of himself? The prize of the English marriage market had taken to his bosom for his winsome bride the daughter of the Old Buccaneer. He was to mix his blood with the blood of the Lincolnshire Kirbys, lying pallid under the hesitating acquittal of a divided jury.

How had he come to this pass, which swung him round to think almost regretfully of the scorned multitude of fair besiegers in the market, some of whom had their unpoetic charms?

He was renowned and unrivalled as the man of stainless honour: the one living man of his word. He had never broken it—never would. There was his distinction among the herd. In that, a man is princely above princes. The nobility of Edward Russett, Earl of Fleetwood, surpasses the nobility of common nobles. But, by all that is holy, he pays for his distinction.

The creature beside him is a franked issue of her old pirate of a father in one respect—nothing frightens her.

There she sits; not a screw of her brows or her lips; and the coach rocked, they were sharp on a spill midway of the last descent. It rocks again. She thinks it scarce worth while to look up to reassure him. She is looking over the country.

'Have you been used to driving?' he said.

She replied: 'No, it is new to me on a coach.'

Carinthia felt at once how wild the wish or half expectation that he would resume the glowing communion of the night which had plighted them.

She did not this time say 'my husband,' still it flicked a whip at his ears.

She had made it more offensive, by so richly toning the official title just won from him as to ring it on the nerves; one had to block it or be invaded. An anticipation that it would certainly recur haunted every opening of her mouth.

Now that it did not, he felt the gap, relieved, and yet pricked to imagine a mimicry of her tones, for the odd foreignness of the word and the sound. She had a voice of her own beside her courage. At the altar, her responses had their music. No wonder: the day was hers. 'My husband' was a manner of saying 'my fish.'

He spoke very civilly. 'Oblige me by telling me what name you are accustomed to answer to.'

See seemed unaware of an Arctic husband, and replied: 'My father called me Carin—short for Carinthia. My mother called me Janey; my second name is Jane. My brother Chillon says both. Henrietta calls me Janey.'

The creature was dead flesh to goads. But the name of her sister-in-law on her lips returned the stroke

neatly. She spared him one whip, to cut him with another.

'You have not informed me which of these names you prefer.'

'Oh, my husband, it is as you shall please.'

Fleetwood smartened the trot of his team, and there was a to-do with the rakish leaders.

Fairies of a malignant humour in former days used to punish the unhappiest of the naughty men who were not favourites, by suddenly planting a hump on their backs. Off the bedevilled wretches pranced, and they kicked, they snorted, whinnied, rolled, galloped, outflying the wind, but not the dismal rider. Marriage is our incubus now. No explanation is offered of why we are afflicted; we have simply offended, or some one absent has offended, and we are handy. The spiteful hag of power ties a wife to us; perhaps for the reason, that we behaved in the spirit of a better time by being chivalrously honourable. Wives are just as inexplicable curses, just as ineradicable and astonishing as humps imposed on shapely backs.

Fleetwood lashed his horses until Carinthia's low cry of entreaty rose to surprise. That stung him.

'Leave the coachman to his devices: we have an appointment and must keep it,' he said.

'They go so willingly.'

'Good beasts, in their way.'

'I do not like the whip.'

'I have the same objection.'

They were on the level of the vale, going along a road between farms and mansions, meadows and garden-plots and park-palings. A strong warm wind drove the pack of clouds over the tree-tops and charged at

the branches. English scenery, animating air; a rouse to the blood and the mind. Carinthia did not ask for hues. She had come to love of the dark land with the warm lifting wind, the big trees and the hedges, and the stately houses, and people requiring to be studied, who mean well and are warm somewhere below, as chimney-pots are, though they are so stiff.

English people dislike endearments, she had found. It might be that her husband disliked any show of fondness. He would have to be studied very much. He was not like others, as Henrietta had warned her. From thinking of him fervidly, she was already past the marvel of the thought that she called him husband. At the same time, a curious intimation, gathered she knew not whence, of the word 'husband' on a young wife's lips as being a foreign sound in England, advised her to withhold it. His behaviour was instructing her.

'Are you weather-wise?—able to tell when the clouds will hold off or pelt,' he said, to be very civil to a neighbour.

She collected her understanding, apparently; treating a conversational run of the tongue as a question to be pondered; and the horses paid for it. Ordinarily he was gentle with his beasts. He lashed at her in his heart for perverting the humanest of men.

'Father was,' she replied.

'Oh! I have heard of him.'

Her face lightened. 'Father had a great name in England.'

'The Old Buccaneer, I think.'

'I do not know. He was a seaman of the navy, like Admiral Fakenham is. Weather at sea, weather on the mountains, he could foretell it always. He wrote a

book; I have a copy you will read. It is a book of Maxims. He often speaks of the weather. English weather and women, he says. But not my mother. My mother he stood aside by herself—*pas capricieuse*; *du tout!* Because she would be out in the weather and brave the weather. She rode, she swam, best of any woman. If she could have known you, what pleasure for me! Mother learnt to read mountain weather from father. I did it too. But sometimes on the high fields' upper snows it is very surprising. Father has been caught. Here the cloud is down near the earth and the strong wind keeps the rain from falling. How long the wind will blow I cannot guess. But you love the mountains. We spoke . . . And mountains' adventures we both love. I will talk French if you like, for, I think, German you do not speak. I may speak English better than French; but I am afraid of my English with you.

'Dear me!' quoth Fleetwood, and he murmured politely and cursorily, attentive to his coachman business. She had a voice that clove the noise of the wheels, and she had a desire to talk—that was evident. Talk of her father set her prattling. It became clear also to his not dishonest, his impressionable mind, that her baby English might be natural. Or she was mildly playing on it, to give herself an air.

He had no remembrance of such baby English at Baden. There, however, she was in a state of enthusiasm—the sort of illuminated transparency they show at the end of fireworks. Mention of her old scapegrace of a father lit her up again. The girl there and the girl here were no doubt the same. It could not be said that she had duped him; he had done it for himself—

acted on by a particular agency. This creature had not the capacity to dupe. He had armed a blunt-witted young woman with his idiocy, and she had dealt the stroke; different in scarce a degree by nature from other young women of prey.

But her look at times, and now and then her voice, gave sign that she counted on befooling him as well, to reconcile him to his bondage. The calculation was excessive. No woman had done it yet. Idiocy plunged him the step which reawakened understanding; and to keep his whole mind alert on guard against any sort of satisfaction with his bargain, he frankly referred to the cause. Not female arts, but nature's impulses, it was his passion for the wondrous in the look of a woman's face, the new morning of the idea of women in the look, and the peep into imaginary novel character, did the trick of enslaving him. Call it idiocy. Such it was. Once acknowledged, it is not likely to recur. An implacable reason sits in its place, with a keen blade for efforts to carry the imposture further afield or make it agreeable. Yet, after giving his word to Lord Levellier, he had prodded himself to think the burden of this wild young woman might be absurdly tolerable and a laugh at the world.

A solicitude for the animal was marked by his inquiry: 'You are not hungry yet?'

'Oh no, not yet,' said she, oddly enlivened.

They had a hamper and were independent of stoppages for provision, he informed her. What more delightful? cried her look, seeing the first mid-day's rest and meal with Chillon on the walk over the mountain from their empty home.

She could get up enthusiasm for a stocked hamper!

And when told of some business that drew him to a meadow they were nearing, she said she would be glad to help, if she could. 'I learn quickly, I know.'

His head acquiesced. The daughter of the Old Buccaneer might learn the business quickly, perhaps; a singularly cutting smile was on his tight lips, in memory of a desire he had as a boy to join hands with an Amazonian damsel and be out over the world for adventures, comrade and bride as one. Here the creature sat. Life is the burlesque of young dreams; or they precipitate us on the roar and grin of a recognized beast world.

The devil possessing him gnawed so furiously that a partial mitigation of the pain was afforded by sight of waving hats on a hill-rise of the road. He flourished his whip. The hats continued at wind-mill work. It signified brisk news to him, and prospect of glee to propitiate any number of devils.

'You will want a maid to attend on you,' he said.

She replied: 'I am not used to attendance on me. Henrietta's maid would help. I did not want her. I had no maid at home. I can do for myself. Father and mother liked me to be very independent.'

He supposed he would have to hear her spelling her words out next.

The hill-top was gained; twenty paces of pretty trotting brought up the coach beside an inn porch, in the style of the finish dear to whips, and even imperative upon them, if they love their art. Two gentlemen stood in the road, and a young woman at the inn door; a dark-haired girl of an anxious countenance. Her puckers vanished at some signal from inside the coach.

'All right, Madge; nothing to fear,' Fleetwood called to her, and she curtseyed.

He alighted, saying to her, before he spoke to his friends: 'I've brought him safe; had him under my eye the last four and twenty hours. He'll do the trick to-day. You don't bet?'

'Oh! my lord, no.'

'Help the lady down. Out with you, Ines!'

The light-legged, barge-faced man touched ground capering. He was greeted 'Kit' by the pair of gentlemen, who shook hands with him, after he had faintly simulated the challenge to a jig with Madge. She flounced from him, holding her arms up to the lady. Landlord, landlady, and hostler besought the lady to stay for the fixing of a ladder. Carinthia stepped, leaped, and entered the inn, Fleetwood remarking: 'We are very independent, Chummy Potts.'

'Cordy bally, by Jove!' Potts cried. But the moment after this disengaged ejaculation, he was taken with a bewilderment. 'At the Opera?' he questioned of his perplexity.

'No, sir, not at the Opera,' Fleetwood rejoined. 'The lady's last public appearance was at the altar.'

'Sort of a suspicion of having seen her somewhere. Left her husband behind, has she?'

'You see: she has gone in.'

The scoring of a proposition of Euclid on the forehead of Potts amused him and the other gentleman, who was hailed 'Mallard!' and cared nothing for problems involving the female of man when such work was to the fore as the pugilistic encounter of the Earl of Fleetwood's chosen Kit Ines, with Lord Brailstone's unbeaten and well-backed Ben Todds.

Ines had done pretty things from the age of seventeen to his twenty third year. Remarkably clever things they were, to be called great in the annals of the Ring. The point, however, was, that the pockets of his backers had seriously felt his latest fight. He received a dog's licking at the hands of Lummy Phelps, his inferior in skill, fighting two to one of the odds; and all because of his fatal addiction to the breaking of his trainer's imposed fast in liquids on the night before the battle. Right through his training, up to that hour, the rascal was devout; the majority's money rattled all on the snug safe side. And how did he get at the bottle? His trainers never could say. But what made him turn himself into a headlong ass, when he had only to wait a night to sit among friends and worshippers drinking off his tumbler upon tumbler with the honours? It was past his wits to explain. Endurance of his privation had snapped in him; or else, which is more likely, this Genius of the Ring was tempted by his genius on the summit of his perfected powers to believe the battle his own, and celebrate it, as became a victor despising the drubbed antagonist.

In any case, he drank, and a minor man gave him the dog's licking. 'Went into it puffy, came out of it bunged,' the chronicle resounding over England ran. Old England read of an 'eyeless carcase' heroically stepping up to time for three rounds of mashing punishment. If he had won the day after all, the country would have been electrified. It sympathized on the side of his backers too much to do more than nod a short approval of his fortitude. To sink with flag flying is next to sinking the enemy. There was talk

of a girl present at the fight, and of how she received the eyeless, almost faceless, carcase of her sweetheart Kit, and carried him away in a little donkey-cart, comfortably cushioned to meet disaster. This petty incident drew the attention of the Earl of Fleetwood, then beginning to be known as the diamond of uncounted facets, patron of the pick of all departments of manly activity in England.

The devotion of the girl Madge to her sweetheart was really a fine story. Fleetwood touched on it to Mr. Mallard, speaking of it like the gentleman he could be, while Chumley Potts wagged impatient acquiescence in a romantic episode of the Ring, that kept the talk from the hotter theme.

'Money's Bank of England to-day, you think?' he interposed, and had his answer after Mallard had said: 'The girl's rather good looking, too.'

'You may double your bets, Chummy. I had the fellow to his tea at my dinner-table yesterday evening; locked him in his bedroom, and had him up and out for a morning spin at six. His trainer, Flipper, 's on the field, drove from Esslemont at nine, confident as trumps.'

'Deuce of a good-looking girl,' Potts could now afford to say; and he sang out: 'Feel fit, lucky dog?'

'Concert pitch!' was the declaration of Kit Ines.

'How about Lord Brailstone's man?'

'Female partner in a quadrille, sir.'

'Ah!' Potts doted on his limbs with a butcher's eye for prize joints.

'Cock-sure has crowed low by sunset,' Mallard observed.

Fleetwood offered him to take his bets.

'You're heavy on it with Brailstone?' said Mallard.

'Three thousand.'

'I'd back you for your luck blindfold.'

A ruffle of sourness shot over the features of the earl, and was noticed by both eager betters, who exchanged a glance.

Potts inspected his watch, and said half aloud: 'Liver, ten to one! That never meant bad luck—except bad to act on. We slept here last night, you know. It's a mile and a quarter from the Royal Sovereign to the field of glory. Pretty well time to start. Brailstone has a drive of a couple of miles. Coaches from London down by this time. Abrane's dead on Ben Todds, any odds. Poor old Braney! "Steady man, Todds." Backs him because he's a "respectable citizen,"—don't drink. A prize-fighter total abstainer has no spurts. Old Braney's branded for the losing side. You might bet against Braney blindfold, Mallard. How long shall you take to polish him off, Kit Ines?'

The opponent of Ben Todds calculated.

'Well, sir, steady Benny ought to be satisfied with his dose in, say, about forty minutes. Maybe he won't own to it before an hour and ten. He's got a proud English stomach.'

'Shall we be late?' Potts asked.

'Jump in,' Fleetwood said to his man. 'We may be five minutes after time, Chummy. I had a longer drive, and had to get married on the way, and—ah, here they are!'

'Lady coming?'

'I fancy she sticks to the coach; I don't know her tastes. Madge must see her hero through it, that's positive.'

Potts deferred his astonishment at the things he was hearing and seeing, which were only Fleetwood's riddles. The fight and the bets rang every other matter out of his head. He beheld the lady, who had come down from the coach like a columbine, mount it like Bean-stalk Jack. Madge was not half so clever, and required a hand at her elbow.

After giving hurried directions to Rundles, the landlord of the Royal Sovereign, Fleetwood took the reins, and all three gentlemen touched hats to the curtseying figure of Mrs. Rundles.

'You have heard, I dare say—it's an English scene,' he spoke, partly turning his face, to Carinthia; 'particularly select to-day. Their Majesties might look on, as the Cæsars did in Rome. Pity we can't persuade them. They ought to set the fashion. Here we have the English people at their grandest, in prime condition, if they were not drunk over-night; and dogged, perfectly awake, magnanimous, all for fair play; fine fellows, upon my word. A little blood, of course.'

But the daughter of the Old Buccaneer would have inherited a tenderness for the sight of blood. She should make a natural Lady Patroness of England's National Sports. We might turn her to that purpose; wander over England with a tail of shouting riff-raff; have exhibitions, join in them, display our accomplishments; issue challenges to fence, shoot, walk, run, box, in time: the creature has muscle. It's one way of crowning a freak; we follow the direction, since the deed done can't be undone; and a precious poetical life, too! You may get as royally intoxicated on swipes as on choice wine; win a name for yourself as the husband of such a wife; a name in sporting

journals and shilling biographies: quite a revival of the Peerage they have begun to rail at!

'I would not wish to leave you,' said Carinthia.

'You have chosen,' said Fleetwood.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH THE BRIDE FROM FOREIGN PARTS IS GIVEN A TASTE OF OLD ENGLAND

Cheers at an open gate of a field saluted the familiar scarlet of the Earl of Fleetwood's coach in Kentish land. They were chorister cheers, the spontaneous ringing out of English country hearts in homage to the nobleman who brightened the heaviness of life on English land with a spectacle of the noble art distinguishing their fathers. He drove along over muffling turf; plough-boys and blue butcher-boys, and smocked old men, with an approach to a hundred-weight on their heels, at the trot to right and left; all hoping for an occasional sight of the jewel called Kitty, that he carried inside. Kitty was there.

Kitty's eyes are shut. Think of that: cradled innocence and angels' dreams and the whole of the hymn just before ding-dong-bang on noses and jaws! That means confidence? Looks like it. But Kitty 's not asleep: you try him. He 's only quiet because he has got to undergo great exertion. Last fight he was knocked out of time, because he went into it honest drunk, they tell. And the earl took him up, to give him a chance of recovering his good name, and that 's Christian. But the

earl, he knows a man as well as a horse. He 's one to follow. 'Go to a fayte down at Esslemont, you won't forget your day. See there, he 's brought a lady on the top o' the coach. That seems for to signify he don't expect it 's going to be much of a bloody business. But there 's no accounting. Anyhow, Broadfield 'll have a name in the papers for Sunday reading. In comes t 'other lord's coach. They 've timed it together close, they have.'

They were pronounced to be both the right sort of noblemen for the country. Lord Brailstone's blue coach rattled through an eastern gate to the corner of the thirty-acre meadow, where Lord Fleetwood had drawn up, a toss from the ring. The meeting of the blue and scarlet coaches drew forth Old England's thunders; and when the costly treasures contained in them popped out heads, the moment was delirious. Kit Ines came after his head on a bound. Ben Todds was ostentatiously deliberate: his party said he was no dancing-master. He stepped out, grave as a barge emerging from a lock, though alive to the hurrahs of supporters and punctilious in returning the formal portion of his rival's too roguish nod. Their look was sharp into the eyes, just an instant.

Brailstone and Fleetwood jumped to the grass and met, talking and laughing, precise upon points of business, otherwise cordial: plenipotentiaries of great powers, whom they have set in motion and bind to the ceremonial opening steps, according to the rules of civilized warfare. They had a short colloquy with newspaper reporters;—an absolutely fair, square, upright fight of Britons was to be chronicled. Captain Abrane, a tower in the crowd, registered bets whenever he could. Cur-

ricles, gigs, carts, pony-traps, boys on ponies, a swarm on legs, flowed to the central point and huddled there.

Was either champion born in Kent? An audacious boy proclaimed Kit Ines a man of Kent. Why, of course he was! and that was why the Earl of Fleetwood backed our cocky Kitty, and means to land him on the top of his profession. Ben Todds was shuffled aside, as one of their Londoners, destitute of county savour.

All very well, but have a spy at Benny Todds. Who looks the square man? And hear what that big gentleman of the other lord's party says. A gentleman of his height and weight has a right to his opinion. He 's dead against Kit Ines: it 's fists, not feet, he says, 'll do it to-day; stamina, he says. Benny has got the stamina.

Todds' possession of the stamina, and the grand voice of Captain Abrane, and the Father Christmas, roast-beef-of-Old England, face of the umpire declared to be on the side of Lord Brailstone's colour blue, darkened the star of Kit Ines till a characteristic piece of behaviour was espied. He dashed his cap into the ring and followed it, with the lightest of vaults across the ropes. There he was, the first in the ring: and that stands for promise of first blow, first blood, first flat knock-down, and last to cry for quarter. His pair of seconds were soon after him. Fleetwood mounted his box.

'Is it to fight?' said Carinthia.

'To see which is the master.'

'They fight to see?'

'Generally until one or the other can't see. You are not obliged to see it; you can be driven away if you wish.'

'I will be here, if you are here.'

'You choose it.'

Fleetwood leaned over to Chumley Potts on the turf. 'Abrane's ruining himself.'

Potts frankly hoped that his friend might be doing so. 'Todds is jolly well backed. He's in prime condition. He's the favourite of the knowing ones.'

'You wouldn't have the odds, if he weren't.'

'No; but the odds are like ten per cent: they conjure the gale, and be hanged,' said Potts; he swore at his betting mania, which destroyed the pleasure of the show he loved.

All in the ring were shaking hands. Shots of a desire to question and comment sped through Carinthia's veins and hurt her. She had gathered that she spoke foolishly to her husband's ear, so she kept her mouth shut, though the unanswered of her inquisitive ignorance in the strange land pricked painfully at her bosom. She heard the girl behind her say: 'Our colours!' when the colour scarlet enwound with Lord Brailstone's blue was tied to the stake: and her husband nodded; he smiled; he liked to hear the girl.

Potts climbed up, crying: 'Toilets complete! Now for paws out, and then at it, my hearties!'

Choice of corners under the leaden low cloud counted for little. A signal was given; a man outside the ring eyed a watch, raised a hand; the two umpires were on foot in their places; the pair of opposing seconds hurried out cheery or bolt-business words to their men; and the champions advanced to the scratch. Todds first, by the courtesy of Ines, whose decorous control of his legs at a weighty moment was rightly read by his party.

Their hands grasped firmly: thereupon becoming fists of a hostile couple in position. And simply to learn

which of us two is the better man! Or in other words, with four simple fists to compass a patent fact and stand it on the historic pedestal, with a little red writing underneath:—you never can patent a fact without it. But mark the differences of this kind of contention from all other—especially the Parliamentary: this is positive, it has a beginning and an end; and it is good-humoured from beginning to end; trial of skill, trial of stamina; Nature and Art; Old English; which made us what we are; and no rancours, no vows of vengeance; the beaten man of the two bowing to the bit of history he has helped to make.

Kittites had need to be confident in the skill of their lither lad. His facer looked granite. Fronting that mass, Kit you might—not to lash about for comparisons—call a bundle of bamboo. Ay, but well knitted, springy, alive every inch of him; crafty, too, as you will soon bear witness. He knows he has got his task, and he 's the man to do it.

There was wary sparring, and mirrors watched them.

'Bigger fellow: but have no fear,' the earl said over his shoulder to Madge.

She said in return: 'Oh, I don't know, I 'm praying.'

Kit was now on his toes, all himself, like one who has found the key. He feinted. Quick as lightning, he landed a bolt on Ben's jib, just at the toll-bar of the bridge, between the eyes, and was off, out of reach, elastic; Ben's counter fell short by a couple of inches. Cheers for first blow.

The earl clucked to Madge. Her gaze at the ring was a sullen intensity.

Will you believe it?—Ben received a second spanking cracker on the spectacles-seat: neat indeed; and,

poor payment for the compliment, he managed to dig a drive at the ribs. As much of that game as may suit you, sturdy Ben! But hear the shout, and behold: First blood to Kit Ines! That tell-tale nose of old Ben's has mounted the Earl of Fleetwood's colours, and all his party are looking Brailstone-blue.

'So far!' said Fleetwood. His grooms took an indication: the hamper was unfastened; sandwiches were handed. Carinthia held one; she tried to nibble, in obedience to her husband's example. Madge refused a bite of food.

Hearing Carinthia say to her: 'I hope he will not be beaten, I hope, I hope,' she made answer: 'You are very good, Miss'; and the young lady flushed.

Gentlemen below were talking up to the earl. A Kentish squire of an estate neighbouring Esslemont introduced a Welsh squire he had driven to see the fun, by the name of Mr. Owain Wythan, a neighbour of the earl's down in Wales. Refreshments were offered. Carinthia submissively sipped the sparkling wine, which stings the lips when we are indisposed to it. The voice of the girl Madge rang on the tightened chords of her breast. Madge had said she was praying: and to pray was all that could be done by two women. Her husband could laugh loudly with Mr. Potts and the other gentlemen and the strangers. He was quite sure the man he supported would win; he might have means of knowing. Carinthia clung to his bare words, for the sake of the girl.

A roaring peal went up from the circle of combat. Kit had it this time. Attacking Ben's peepers, he was bent on defending his own, and he caught a body-blow that sent him hopping back to his pair of seconds,

five clear hops to the rear, like a smashed surge-wave off the rock. He was respectful for the remainder of the round. But hammering at the system he had formed, in the very next round he dropped from a tremendous repetition of the blow, and lay flat as a turbot. The bets against him had simultaneously a see-saw rise.

'Bellows, he appears to have none,' was the comment of Chumley Potts.

'Now for training, Chummy!' said Lord Fleetwood.

'Chummy!' signifying a crow over Potts, rang out of the hollows of Captain Abrane on Lord Brailstone's coach.

Carinthia put a hand behind her to Madge. It was grasped, in gratitude for sympathy or in feminine politeness. The girl murmured: 'I 've seen worse.' She was not speaking to ears.

Lord Fleetwood sat watch in hand. 'Up,' he said; and, as if hearing him, Kit rose from the ministering second's knee. He walked stiffly, squared after the fashion of a man taught caution. Ben made play. They rounded the ring, giving and taking. Ben rushed, and had an emollient; spouted again and was corked; again, and received a neat red-waxen stopper. He would not be denied at Kit's door, found him at home and hugged him. Kit got himself to grass, after a spell of heavy fibbing, Ben's game.

It did him no great harm; it might be taken for an enlivener; he was dead on his favourite spot the ensuing round, played postman on it. So cleverly, easily, dancingly, did he perform the double knock and the retreat, that Chumley Potts was moved to forget his wagers and exclaim: 'Racket-ball, by Jove!'

'If he doesn't let the fellow fib the wind out of him,' Mallard addressed his own crab eyeballs.

Lord Fleetwood heard and said coolly: 'Tight-strung. I kept him fasting since he earned his breakfast. You don't wind an empty rascal fit for action. A sword through the lungs won't kill when there's no air in them.'

That was printed in the *Few Words before the Encounter*, in the Book of MAXIMS FOR MEN. Carinthia, hearing everything her husband uttered, burned to remind him of the similarity between his opinions and her father's.

She was learning, that for some reason, allusions to her father were not acceptable. She squeezed the hand of Madge, and felt a pressure, like a scream, telling her the girl's heart was with the fight beneath them. She thought it natural for her. She wished she could continue looking as intently. She looked because her husband looked. The dark hills and clouds curtaining the run of the stretch of fields relieved her sight.

The clouds went their way; the hills were solid, but like a blue smoke; the scene here made them very distant and strange. Those two men were still hitting, not hating one another; only to gratify a number of unintelligible people and win a success. But the earth and sky seemed to say, What is the glory? They were insensible to it, as they are not—they are never insensible to noble grounds of strife. They bless the spot, they light lamps on it; they put it into books of history, make it holy, if the cause was a noble one or a good one.

Or supposing both those men loved the girl, who loved

one of them! Then would Carinthia be less reluctantly interested in their blows.

Her infant logic stumbled on for a reason while she repressed the torture the scene was becoming, as though a reason could be found by her submissive observation of it. And she was right in believing that a reason for the scene must or should exist. Only, like other bewildered instinctive believers, she could not summon the great universe or a life's experience to unfold it. Her one consolation was in squeezing the hand of the girl from time to time.

Not stealthily done, it was not objected to by the husband whose eye was on all. But the persistence in doing it sank her from the benignity of her station to the girl's level: it was conduct much too raw, and grated on the deed of the man who had given her his name.

Madge pleased him better. She had the right to be excited, and she was very little demonstrative. She had—well, in justice, the couple of them had, only she had it more—the tone of the women who can be screwed to witness a spill of blood, peculiarly catching to hear; —a tone of every string in them snapped except the silver string. Catching to hear? It is worth a stretching of them on the rack to hear that low buzz-hum of their inner breast . . . By heaven! we have them at their best when they sing that note.

His watch was near an hour of the contest, and Brailstone's man had scored first knock-down blow, a particularly clean floorer. Thinking of that, he was cheered by hearing Chummy Potts, whose opinions he despised, cry out to Abrane:—

'Yeast to him!' For the face of Todds was visibly

swelling to the ripest of plums from Kit's deliveries. Down he went. He had the sturdy legs which are no legs to a clean blow. Odds were offered against him.

'Oh! pretty play with your right, Kit!' exclaimed Mallard, as Kit fetched his man an ugly stroke on the round of the waist behind, and the crowd sent up the name of the great organs affected: a sickener of a stroke, if dealt soundly. It meant more than it showed. Kit was now for taking liberties. Light as ever on his pins, he now and then varied his attentions to the yeasty part, delivering a wakener in unexpected quarters: masterly as the skilled cook's carving of a joint with hungry guests for admirers.

'Eh, Madge?' the earl said.

She kept her sight fixed, replying: 'Yes, I think . . .' Carinthia joined with her: 'I must believe it that he will: but will the other man, poor man, submit? I entreat him to put away his pride. It is his—oh, poor man!'

Ben was having it hot and fast on a torso physiognomy.

The voices of these alien women thrilled the fray and were a Bardic harp to Lord Fleetwood.

He dropped a pleasant word on the heads in the curricle.

Mr. Owain Wythan looked up. 'Worthy of Theocritus. It's the Boxing Twin and the Bembrycian giant. The style of each. To the letter!'

'Kit is assiduously fastening Ben's blinkers,' Potts remarked.

He explained to the incomprehensible lady he fancied he had somewhere seen, that the battle might be known as near the finish by the behaviour on board Lord Brailstone's coach.

'It's like Foreign Affairs and the Stock Exchange,' he said to the more intelligent males. 'If I want to know exactly how the country stands, I turn to the Money Article in the papers. That's a barometrical certainty. No use inquiring abroad. Look at old Rufus Abrane. I see the state of the fight on the old fellow's mug. He hasn't a bet left in him!'

'Captain Mountain—Rufus Mus!' cried Lord Fleetwood, and laughed at the penetrative portrait Woodseer's epigram sketched; he had a desire for the presence of the singular vagabond.

The Rufus Mus in the Captain Mountain exposed his view of the encounter, by growing stiller, apparently growing smaller, without a squeak, like the entrapped; and profoundly contemplative, after the style of the absolutely detached, who foresee the fatal crash, and are calculating, far ahead of events, the means for meeting their personal losses.

The close of the battle was on the visage of Rufus Abrane fifteen minutes before that Elgin marble under red paint in the ring sat on the knee of a succouring seconder, mopped, rubbed, dram-primed, puppy-peeping, inconsolably comforted, preparatory to the resumption of the great-coat he had so hopefully cast from his shoulders. Not downcast, by any means. Like an old Roman, the man of the sheer hulk with purple eye-mounds found his legs to do the manful thing, show that there was no bad blood, stand equal to all forms. Ben Todds, if ever man in Old England, looked the picture you might label 'Bellyful,' it was remarked. Kit Ines had an appearance of springy readiness to lead off again. So they faced on the opening step of their march into English History.

Vanquisher and vanquished shook hands, engaged in a parting rally of good-humoured banter; the beaten man said his handsome word; the best man capped it with a compliment to him. They drink of different cups to-day. Both will drink of one cup in the day to come. But the day went too clearly to crown the light and the tight and the right man of the two, for moralizing to wag its tail at the end. Oldsters and youngsters agreed to that. Science had done it: happy the backers of Science! Not one of them alluded to the philosophical 'hundred years hence.' For when England, thanks to a spirited pair of our young noblemen, has exhibited one of her characteristic performances consummately, Philosophy is bidden fly; she is a foreign bird.

CHAPTER XVII

RECORDS A SHADOW CONTEST CLOSE ON THE FOREGOING

Kit Ines cocked an eye at Madge, in the midst of the congratulations and the pæans pumping his arms. As he had been little mauled, he could present a face to her, expecting a wreath of smiles for the victor.

What are we to think of the contrarious young woman who, when he lay beaten, drove him off the field and was all tenderness and devotion? She bobbed her head, hardly more than a trifle pleased, one might say. Just like females. They're riddles, not worth spelling. Then, drunk I'll get to-night, my pretty dear! the man muttered, soured by her inopportune staidness, as an opponent's bruisings could never have rendered him.

She smiled a lively beam in answer to the earl; 'Oh yes, I 'm glad. It 's your doing, my lord.' Him it was that she thanked, and for the moment prized most. The female riddle is hard to read, because it is compounded of sensations, and they rouse and appeal to the similar cockatrices in us, which either hiss back or coil upon themselves. She admired Kit Ines for his valour: she hated that ruinous and besotting drink. It flung skeletons of a married couple on the wall of the future. Nevertheless her love had been all maternal to him when he lay chastised and disgraced on account of his vice. Pity had done it. Pity not being stirred, her admiration of the hero declared victorious, whose fortunes in uncertainty had stopped the beating of her heart, was eclipsed by gratitude toward his preserver, and a sentiment eclipsed becomes temporarily coldish, against our wish and our efforts, in a way to astonish; making her think that she cannot hold two sentiments at a time; when it is but the fact that she is unable to keep the two equally warm.

Carinthia said to her: 'He is brave.'

'Oh yes, he 's brave,' Madge assented.

Lord Brailstone, flourishing his whip, cried out: 'At Canleys to-night?'

The earl nodded: 'I shall be there.'

'You, too, Chummy?' came from Abrane.

'To see you dance,' Potts rejoined, and mumbled: 'But will he dance! Old Braney's down on his luck; he 's a specimen of a fellow emptier and not lighter. And won't be till supper-time. But, I say, Fleet, how the deuce?—funny sort of proceeding!—You haven't introduced me.'

'The lady bears my name, Mr. Chumley Potts.'

With a bow to the lady's profile and a mention of a glimpse at Baden, Potts ejaculated: 'It happened this morning?'

'You allude to the marriage. It happened this morning.'

'How do I get to Canleys?'

'I drive you. Another team from the Esslemont stables is waiting at the Royal.'

'You stay at Canleys?'

'No.'

'No? Oh! Funny, upon my word. Though I don't know why not—except that people . . .'

'Count your winnings, Chummy.'

Fleetwood remarked to his bride: 'Our friend has the habit of soliloquizing in company. I forgot to tell you of an appointment of mine at a place called Canleys, about twenty miles or more from here. I gave my word, so I keep it. The landlady at the inn, Mrs. Rundles, motherly kind of woman; she will be attentive. They don't cook badly, for an English inn, I have heard. Madge here will act as your lady's-maid for the time. You will find her serviceable; she's a bruiser's lass and something above it.—Ines informed me, Madge, you were going to friends of yours at the Wells. You will stay at the Royal and wait on this lady, who bears my name. You understand?—A girl I can trust for courage, if the article is in request,' he resumed to his bride; and talked generally of the inn and the management of it, and its favoured position outside the village and contiguous to the river, upon which it subsisted.

Carinthia had heard. She was more than ever the stunned young woman she had been since her mount-

ing of the coach, between the village church and Lekkatts.

She said not a word. Why should she?—her object was won. Give her that, and a woman's tongue will consent to rest. The dreaded weapon rests also when she is kept spinning by the whip. She gives out a pleasant hum, too. Her complexion must be pronounced dull in repose. A bride on her travels with an aspect of wet chalk, rather helps to scare mankind from marriage: which may be good or bad; but she reflects a sicklier hue on the captured Chessman calling her his own. Let her shine in privacy.

Fleetwood drew up at the Royal Sovereign, whereof the reigning monarch, in blue uniform on the sign-board, curtseyed to his equally windy subjects; and a small congregation of the aged, and some cripples and infants, greeted the patron of Old England's man-fullest display, cheering at news of the fight, brought them by many little runners.

'Your box has been conveyed to your room,' he said to his bride.

She bowed. This time she descended the coach by the aid of the ladder.

Ines, victorious in battle, had scant notice from his love. 'Yes, I'm glad,' and she passed him to follow her newly constituted mistress. His pride was dashed, all the foam of the first draw on the top of him blown off, as he figuratively explained the cause of his gloom to the earl. 'I drink and I gets a licking—that girl nurses and cossets me. I don't drink and I whops my man—she shows me her back. Ain't it encouragement, my lord?'

'You ought to know them by this time, you dolt,'

returned his patron, and complimented him on his bearing in the fight. 'You shall have your two hundred, and something will be added. Hold handy here till I mount. I start in ten minutes.'

Whether to speak a polite adieu to the bride, whose absurd position she had brought on her own head, was debated for half a minute. He considered that the wet chalk-quarry of a beauty had at all events the merit of not being a creature to make scenes. He went up to the sitting-room. If she was not there, he would leave his excuses.

She was there, and seated; neither crying, nor smiling, nor pointedly serious in any way, not conventionally at her ease either. And so clearly was he impressed by her transparency in simplicity of expression, that he took without a spurn at it the picture of a woman half drained of her blood, veiling the wound. And a young woman, a stranger to suffering: perhaps —as the creatures do—looking for the usual flummery tenderness, what they call happiness; wondering at the absence of it and the shifty ghost of a husband she has got by floundering into the bog known as Marriage. She would have it, and here she was!

He entered the situation and was possessed by the shivering delicacy of it. Surface emotions were not seen on her. She might be a creature with a soul. Here and there the thing has been found in women. It is priceless when found, and she could not be acting. One might swear the creature had no power to act.

She spoke without offence, the simplest of words, affected no solicitudes, put on no gilt smiles, wore no reproaches: spoke to him as if so it happened—he had necessarily a journey to perform. One could see all

the while big drops falling from the wound within. One could hear it in her voice. Imagine a crack of the string at the bow's deep stress. Or imagine the bow paralyzed at the moment of the deepest sounding. And yet the voice did not waver. She had now the richness of tone carrying on a music through silence.

Well, then, at least, he had not been the utterly duped fool he thought himself since the consent was pledged to wed her.

More, she had beauty—of its kind. Or splendour or grandeur, was the term for it. But it bore no name. None of her qualities—if they were qualities—had a name. She stood with a dignity that the word did not express. She endured meekly, when there was no meekness. Pain breathed out of her, and not a sign of pain was visible. She had, under his present observation of her, beauty, with the lines of her face breaking in revolt from beauty—or requiring a superterrestrial illumination to show the harmony. He, as he now saw, had erred grossly in supposing her insensitive, and therefore slow of a woman's understanding. She drew the breath of pain through the lips: red lips and well cut. Her brown eyes were tearless, not alluring or beseeching or repelling; they did but look, much like the skies opening high aloof on a wreck of storm. Her reddish hair—chestnut, if you will—let fall a skein over one of the rugged brows, and softened the ruggedness by making it wilder, as if a great bird were winging across a shoulder of the mountain ridges. Conceived of the mountains, built in their image, the face partook alternately of mountain terror or splendour; wholly, he remembered, of the splendour when her blood ran warm. No longer the chalk-quarry face,

—its paleness now was that of night Alps beneath a moon chasing the shadows.

She might be casting her spells again.

'You remember I told you,' he said, 'I have given my word—I don't break it—to be at a Ball. Your uncle was urgent to have the ceremony over. These clashes occur. The people here—I have spoken of that: people of good repute for attention to guests. I am uncertain of the time . . . we have all to learn to wait. So then, good-bye till we meet.'

He was experiencing a novel nip of torment, of just the degree which takes a partial appeasement from the inflicting of it, and calls up a loathed compassion. She might have been in his arms for a step, though she would not have been the better loved.

He was allowed his escape, bearing with him enough of husband to execrate another enslaving pledge of his word, that begat a frenzy to wreak some caresses on the creature's intolerably haunting image. Of course, he could not return to her. How would she receive him? There was no salt in the thought of it; she was too submissive.

However, there would be fun with Chummy Potts on the drive to Canleys; fun with Rufus Abrane at Mrs. Cowper Quillett's; and with the Countess Livia, smothered, struggling, fighting for life with the title of Dowager. A desire for unbridled fun had hold of him: any amount of it, to excess in any direction. And through this cloud, as a dry tongue after much wine craves water, glimpses of his tramp's walk with a fellow-tramp on a different road, enjoying strangely healthy vagabond sensations and vast ideas, brought the vagrant philosopher refreshfully to his mind: chiefly for the reason that while in Woodseer's company he had hardly

suffered a stroke of pain from the thought of Henrietta. She was now a married woman, he was a married man—by the register. Stronger proof of the maddest of worlds could not be furnished.

Sane in so mad a world, a man is your flabby citizen among outlaws, good for plucking. Fun, at any cost, is the one object worth a shot in such a world. And the fun is not to stop. If it does, we are likely to be got hold of, and lugged away to the altar—the terminus. That foul disaster has happened, through our having temporarily yielded to a fit of the dumps and treated a mad world's lunatic issue with some seriousness. But fun shall be had with the aid of His Highness below. The madder the world, the madder the fun. And the mixing in it of another element, which it has to beguile us—romance—is not at all bad cookery. Poetic romance is delusion—a tale of a Corsair; a poet's brain, a bottle of gin, and a theatrical wardrobe. Comic romance is about us everywhere, alive for the tapping.

A daughter of the Old Buccaneer should participate in it by right of birth: she would expect it in order to feel herself perfectly at home. Then, be sure, she finds an English tongue and prattles away as merrily as she does when her old scapegrace of a father is the theme. Son-in-law to him! But the path of wisdom runs in the line of facts, and to have wild fun and romance on this pantomime path, instead of kicking to break away from it, we follow things conceived by the genius of the situation, for the delectation of the fair Countess of Fleetwood and the earl, her delighted husband, quite in the spirit of the Old Buccaneer, father of the bride.

Carinthia sat beside the fire, seeing nothing in the room or on the road. Up in her bedchamber, the girl Madge was at her window. She saw Lord Fleetwood standing alone, laughing, it seemed, at some thought; he threw up his head. Was it a newly married man leaving his bride and laughing? The bride was a dear lady, fit for better than to be driven to look on at a prize-fight—a terrible scene to a lady. She was left solitary: and this her wedding day? The earl had said it, he had said she bore his name, spoke of coming from the altar, and the lady had blushed to hear herself called Miss. The pressure of her hand was warm with Madge: her situation roused the fervid latent sisterhood in the breast of women.

Before he mounted the coach, Lord Fleetwood talked to Kit Ines. The girl ran downstairs to bid her lover good-bye and show him she really rejoiced in his victory. Kit came to her saying: 'Given my word of honour I won't make a beast of myself to-night. Got to watch over you and your lady.'

Lord Fleetwood started his fresh team, casting no glance at the windows of the room where his bride was. He and the gentlemen on the coach were laughing.

His leaving of his young bride to herself this day was classed among the murky flashes which distinguished the deeds of noblemen. But his laughter on leaving her stamped it a cruelty; of the kind that plain mortals, who can be monsters, commit. Madge conceived a pretext for going into the presence of her mistress, whose attitude was the same as when she first sat in the chair. The lady smiled and said: 'He is not hurt much?' She thought for them about her.

The girl's heart of sympathy thumped, and her hero

became a very minute object. He had spoken previously of the making or not making a beast of himself, without inflicting a picture of the beast. His words took shape now, and in consequence a little self-pity began to move. It stirred to swell the great wave of pity for the lady, that was in her bosom. 'Oh, he!' she said, and extinguished the thought of him; and at once her under-lip was shivering, her eyes filled and poured.

Carinthia rose anxiously. The girl dropped at her feet. 'You have been so good to me to-day, my lady! so good to me to-day! I can't help it—I don't often —just for this moment; I've been excited. Oh, he's well, he will do; he's nothing. You say "poor child!" But I'm not; it's only excitement. I do long to serve you the best I can.'

She stood up in obedience and had the arms of her young mistress pressing her. Tears also were streaming from Carinthia's eyes. Heartily she thanked the girl for the excuse to cry.

They were two women. On the road to Canleys, the coach conveying men spouted with the lusty anecdote, relieved of the interdict of a tyrannical sex.

CHAPTER XVIII

DOWN WHITECHAPEL WAY

Contention begets contention in a land of the pirate races. Gigs were at high rival speed along the road from the battle-field to London. They were the elec-

trical wires of the time for an expectant population bursting to have report of so thundering an event as the encounter of two champion light weights, nursed and backed by a pair of gallant young noblemen, pick of the whole row of coronets above. London panted gaping and the gigs flew with the meat to fill it.

Chumley Potts offered Ambrose Mallard fair odds that the neat little trap of the chief sporting journal, which had a reputation to maintain, would be over one or other of the bridges crossing the Thames first. Mallard had been struck by the neat little trap of an impudent new and lower-priced journal, which had a reputation to gain. He took the proffered odds, on the cry as of a cracker splitting. Enormous difficulties in regard to the testimony and the verifications were discussed; they were overcome. Potts was ready for any amount of trouble; Mallard the same. There was clearly a race. There would consequently be a record. Visits to the offices of those papers, perhaps half a day at the south end of London or on Westminster bridge, examining witnesses, corner shopmen, watermen, and the like, would or should satisfactorily establish the disputed point.

Fleetwood had his fun; insomuch that he laughed himself into a sentiment of humaneness toward the couple of donkeys and forgot his contempt of them. Their gamblings and their bets increased his number of dependents; and imbeciles were preferable to dolts or the dry gilt figures of the circle he had to move in. Matter for some astonishment had been furnished to the latter this day; and would cause an icy Signor stare and rather an angry Signora flutter. A characteristic of that upper circle, as he knew it, is, that the good

are dull, the vicious very bad. They had nothing to please him but manners. Elsewhere this land is a land of no manners. Take it and make the most of it, then, for its quality of brute honesty: which is found to flourish best in the British prize-ring.

His irony landed him there. It struck the country a ringing blow. But it struck an almost effacing one at the life of the young nobleman of boundless wealth, whose highest renown was the being a patron of prize-fighters. Husband of the daughter of the Old Buccaneer as well! perchance as a result. That philosopher tramp named her 'beautiful Gorgon.' She has no beauty; and as for Gorgon, the creature has a look of timid softness in waiting behind her rocky eyes. A barbaric damsel beginning to nibble at civilization, is nearer the mark; and ought she to be discouraged?

Fleetwood's wrath with his position warned him against the dupery of any such alcove thoughts. For his wrath revenged him, and he feared the being stripped of it, lest a certain fund of his own softness, that he knew of, though few did, should pull him to the creature's feet. She belonged to him indeed; so he might put her to the trial of whether she had a heart and personal charm, without the ceremony of wooing—which, in his case, tempted to the feeling desperately earnest and becoming enslaved. He speculated upon her eyelids and lips, and her voice, when melting, as women do in their different ways; here and there with an execrable—perhaps pardonable—art; one or two divinely. The vision drew him to a headlong plunge and swim of the amorous mind, occupying a minute, filling an era. He corrected the feebleness, and at the same time threw a practical

coachman's glance on peculiarities of the road, requiring some knowledge of it if traversed backward at a whipping pace on a moonless night.

He did not phrase it, that a talk with the fellow Woodseer of his mountains and his forests, and nature, philosophy, poetry, would have been particularly healthy for him, almost as good as the good counsel he needed and solicited none to give him. It swept among his ruminations while he pricked Potts and Mallard to supply his craving for satanical fare.

Gower Woodseer, the mention of whom is a dejection to the venerable source of our story, was then in the act of emerging from the Eastward into the Southward of the line of Canterbury's pilgrims when they set forth to worship, on his homeward course, after a walk of two days out of Dover. He descended London's borough, having exactly twopence halfpenny for refreshment, following a term of prudent starvation, at the end of the walk. It is not a district seductive to the wayfarer's appetite; as, for example, one may find the Jew's fry of fish in oil, inspiriting the Shoreditch region, to be. Nourishment is afforded, according to the laws of England's genius in the arts of refection, at uninviting shops, to the necessitated stomach. A penn'orth of crumb of bread, assisted on its laborious passage by a penn'orth of the rinsings of beer, left the natural philosopher a ha'penny for dessert at the stall of an applewoman, where he withstood an inclination toward the juicy fruit and chose nuts. They extend a meal, as a grimace broadens the countenance, illusorily; but they help to cheat an emptiness in time, where it is nearly as offensive to our sensations as within us; and that prolonged occupation of the jaws

goes a length to persuade us we are filling. All the better if the substance is indigestible. Tramps of the philosophical order, who are the practically sagacious, prefer tough grain for the teeth. Woodseer's munching of his nuts awakened to fond imagination the picture of his father's dinner, seen one day and little envied: a small slice of cold boiled mutton-flesh in a crescent of white fat, with a lump of dry bread beside the plate.

Thus he returned to the only home he had, not disheartened, and bearing scenes that outvied London's print-shops for polychrome splendour, an exultation to recall. His condition, moreover, threw his father's life and work into colour: the lean Whitechapel house of the minister among the poor; the joy in the saving of souls, if he could persuade himself that such good labour advanced: and at the fall of light, the pastime task of bootmaking—a desirable occupation for a thinker. Thought flies best when the hands are easily busy. Cobblers have excursive minds. Their occasional rap at the pegs diversifies the stitchings and is often happily timed to settle an internal argument. Seek in a village for information concerning the village or the state of mankind, you will be less disappointed at the cobbler's than elsewhere, it has been said.

As Gower had anticipated, with lively feelings of pleasure, Mr. Woodseer was at the wonted corner of his back room, on the stool between two tallow candle-flames, leather-scented strongly, when the wanderer stood before him, in the image of a ball that has done with circling about a stable point.

'Back?' the minister sang out at once, and his wrinkles gleamed.

Their hands grasped.

'Hungry, sir, rather.'

'To be sure, you are. One can read it on your boots. Mrs. Jones will spread you a table. How many miles to-day? Show the soles. They tell a tale of wear.'

They had worn to resemble the half-dozen thin-edged layers of still upper cloud round the peep of coming sky.

'About forty odd to-day, sir. They've done their hundreds of miles and have now come to dock. I'll ask Mrs. Jones to bring me a plate here.'

Gower went to the housekeeper in the kitchen. His father's front door was unfastened by day; she had not set eyes on him yet, and Mr. Woodseer murmured:

'Now she's got the boy. There's clasping and kissing. He's all wild Wales to her.'

The plate of meat was brought by Mary Jones with Gower beside her, and a sniffle of her happiness audible. She would not, although invited to stay and burning to hear Gower, wait in the room where father and son had to talk together after a separation, long to love's counting. She was a Welshwoman of the pure blood, therefore delicately mannered by nature.

'Yes, dear lad, tobacco helps you on to the marrow of your story, and I too will blow the cloud,' said Mr. Woodseer, when the plate was pushed aside and the pipe appeared.

So Gower's recital of his wanderings began, more puffs than speech at the commencement. He was alternately picturesque and sententious until he reached Baden; there he became involved, from thinking of a revelation of beauty in woman.

Mr. Woodseer rapped the leather on his block.

'A place where they have started public gambling, I am told.'

'We must look into all the corners of the world to know it, sir, and the world has to be riddled or it riddles us.'

'Ah. Did you ever tell a lie, Gower Woodseer?'

'I played.'

'You played. The Lord be thanked you have kept your straight tongue! The Lord can always enter a heart of truth. Sin cannot dwell with it. But you played for gain, and that was a licenced thieving; and that was a backsliding; and there will have to be a climbing up. And what that means, your hold on truth will learn. Touch sin and you accommodate yourself to its vileness. Ay, you love nature. Nature is not anchorage for vessels like men. If you loved the Book you would float in harbour. You played. I do trust you lost.'

'You have your wish, sir.'

'To have won their money, Gower! Rather starve.'

'I did.'

'Your reason for playing, poor lad?'

'The reason eludes reason.'

'Not in you.'

'Sight of the tables; an itch to try them—one's self as well; a notion that the losers were playing wrong. In fine, a bit of a whirl of a medley of atoms; I can't explain it further.

'Ah. The tippler's fumes in his head! Spotty business, Gower Woodseer. "Lead us not into temptation" is worldly wisdom in addition to heavenly.'

After listening to an extended homily, with a general

assent and tobacco's phlegm, Gower replied to his father's 'You starved manfully?' nodding: 'From Baden to Nancy. An Alsatian cottager at times helped me along, milk and bread.'

'Wholesome for body and for soul.'

'Entering Nancy I subscribed to the dictum of our first fathers, which dogs would deliver, if they could speak: that there is no driver like stomach: and I went head on to the College, saw the Principal: plea of urgency. No engagement possible, to teach either French or English. But he was inquisitive touching the urgency. That was my chance. The French are humane when they are not suspicious of you. They are generous, if you put a light to their minds. As I was dealing with a scholarly one, I made use of such ornamental literary skill as I possessed, to prove urgency. He supplied me with bread, fruit, and wine. In the end he procured me pupils. I lodged over a baker's shop. I had good walks, and learnt something of forestry there—a taking study. When I had saved enough to tramp it home, I said my adieux to that good friend and tramped away, entering London with about the same amount in small coin as when I entered Nancy. A manner of exactly hitting the mark, that some would not find so satisfactory as it is to me.'

The minister sighed. 'There comes in the "philosophy," I suppose. When will you understand, that this "philosophy" is only the passive of a religious faith? It seems to suit you gentlemen of the road while you are young. Work among the Whitechapel poor. It would be a way for discovering the shallows of your "philosophy" earlier.'

Gower asked him: 'Going badly here, sir?'

'Murders, robberies, misusage of women, and misconduct of women!—Drink, in short: about the same amount. Drink is their death's river, rolling them on helpless as corpses, on to—may they find mercy! I and a few stand—it 's in the tide we stand here, to stop them, pluck them out, make life a bit sweet to them before the poor bodies go beneath. But come! all 's not dark, we have our gleams. I speak distressed by one of our girls: a good girl, I believe; and the wilfullest that ever had command of her legs. A well-favoured girl! You 'll laugh, she has given her heart to a prize-fighter. Well, you can say, she might have chosen worse. He drinks, she hates it; she loves the man and hates his vice. He swears amendment, is hiccupping at night; fights a match on the morrow, and gets beaten out of formation. No matter: whenever, wherever, that man goes to his fight, that girl follows to nurse him after it. He 's her hero. Women will have one, and it 's their lottery. You read of such things; here we have it alive and walking. I am led to think they 're an honest couple. They come of established families. Her mother was out of Caermarthen; died under my ministration, saintly, forgiving the drunkard. You may remember the greengrocer, Tobias Winch? He passed away in shrieks for one drop. I had to pitch my voice to the top notes to get hearing for the hymn. He was a reverent man, with the craving by fits. That should have been a lesson to Madge.'

'A little girl at the greengrocer's hard by? She sold me apples; rather pretty,' said Gower.

'A fine grown girl now—Madge Winch; a comely

wench she is. It breaks her sister Sarah's heart. They both manage the little shop; they make it prosper in a small way; enough, and what need they more? Then Christopher Ines has on one of his matches. Madge drives her cart out, if it's near town. She's off down into Kent to-day by coach, Sarah tells me. A great nobleman patronizes Christopher; a Lord Fleetwood, a lord of wealth. And he must be thoughtful for these people: he sent Sarah word that Christopher should not touch drink. You may remember a butcher Ines in the street next to us. Christopher was a wild lad, always at "best man" with every boy he met: went to sea—ran away. He returned a pugilist. The girl will be nursing him now. I have spoken to her of him; and I trust to her; but I mourn her attachment to the man who drinks.'

'The lord's name?' said Gower.

'Lord Fleetwood, Sarah named him. And so it pleases him to spend his money!'

'He has other tastes. I know something of him, sir. He promises to be a patron of Literature as well. His mother was a South Wales woman.'

'Could he be persuaded to publish a grand edition of the Triads?' Mr. Woodseer said at once.

'No man more likely.'

'If you see him, suggest it.'

'Very little chance of my meeting him again. But those Triads! They're in our blood. They spring to tie knots in the head. They push me to condense my thoughts to a tight ball. They were good for primitive times: but they—or the trick of the mind engendered by them—trip my steps along the lines of composition. I produce pellets instead of flowing sheets. It'll come

right. At present I 'm so bent to pick and perfect, polish my phrase, that I lose my survey. As a consequence, my vocabulary falters.'

'Ah,' Mr. Woodseer breathed and smote. 'This Literature is to be your profession for the means of living?'

'Nothing else. And I 'm so low down in the market way of it, that I could not count on twenty pounds per annum. Fifty would give me standing, an independent fifty.'

'To whom are you crying, Gower?'

'Not to gamble, you may be sure.'

'You have a home.'

'Good work of the head wants an easy conscience. I 've too much of you in me for a comfortable pensioner.'

'Or is it not, that you have been living the gentleman out there, with just a holiday title to it?'

Gower was hit by his father's thrust. 'I shall feel myself a pieman's chuckpenny as long as I 'm unproductive, now I 've come back and have to own to a home,' he said.

Tea brought in by Mrs. Mary Jones rather brightened him until he considered that the enlivenment was due to a purchase by money, of which he was incapable, and he rejected it, like an honourable man. Simultaneously, the state of depression threw critic shades on a prized sentence or two among his recent confections. It was rejected for the best of reasons and the most discomforting: because it racked our English; signifying, that he had not yet learnt the right use of his weapons.

He was in this wrestle, under a placid demeanour, for several days, hearing the shouts of Whitechapel Kit's victory, and hearing of Sarah Winch's anxiety on account of her sister Madge; unaffected by sounds of joy or grief, in his effort to produce a supple English, with Baden's Madonna for sole illumination of his darkness. To her, to the illimitable gold-mist of perspective and the innumerable images the thought of her painted for him, he owed the lift which withdrew him from contemplation of himself in a very disturbing stagnant pool of the wastes; wherein often will strenuous youth, grown faint, behold a face beneath a scroll inscribed *Impostor*. All whose aim was high have spied into that pool, and have seen the face. His glorions lady would not let it haunt him.

The spell she cast had likewise power to raise him clean out of a neighbourhood hinting Erebus to the young man with thirst for air, solitudes, and colour. Scarce imaginable as she was, she reigned here, in the idea of her, more fixedly than where she had been visible; as it were, by right of her being celestially removed from the dismal place. He was at the same time not insensible to his father's contented ministrations among these homes of squalor; they pricked the curiosity, which was in the youthful philosopher a form of admiration. For his father, like all Welshmen, loved the mountains. Yet here he lived, exhorting, ministering, aiding, supported up to high good cheer by some, it seemed, superhuman backbone of uprightness;—his religious faith? Well, if so, the thing might be studied. But things of the frozen senses, lean and hueless things, were as repellent to Gower's imagination as his father's dishes to an epicure. What

he envied was, the worthy old man's heart of feeling for others: his feeling at present for the girl Sarah Winch and her sister Madge, who had not been heard of since she started for the fight. Mr. Woodseer had written to her relatives at the Wells, receiving no consolatory answer.

He was relieved at last; and still a little perplexed. Madge had returned, he informed Gower. She was well, she was well in health; he had her assurances that she was not excited about herself.

'She has brought a lady with her, a great lady to lodge with her. She has brought the Countess of Fleetwood to lodge with her.'

Gower heard those words from his father; and his father repeated them. To the prostrate worshipper of the Countess of Fleetwood, they were a blow on the head; madness had set in here, was his first recovering thought, or else a miracle had come to pass. Or was it a sham Countess of Fleetwood imposing upon the girl? His father was to go and see the great lady, at the greengrocer's shop; at her request, according to Madge. Conjectures shot their perishing tracks across a darkness that deepened and made shipwreck of philosophy. Was it the very Countess of Fleetwood penitent for her dalliance with the gambling passion, in feminine need of pastor's aid, having had report from Madge of this good shepherd? His father expressed a certain surprise; his countenance was mild. He considered it a merely strange occurrence.

Perhaps, in a crisis, a minister of religion is better armed than a philosopher. Gower would not own that, but he acknowledged the evidences, and owned to envy; especially when he accompanied his father to the green-

grocer's shop, and Mr. Woodseer undisturbedly said:—

'Here is the place.' The small stuffed shop appeared to grow portentously cavernous and waveringly illumined.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GIRL MADGE

Customers were at the counter of the shop, and these rational figures, together with the piles of cabbages, the sacks of potatoes, the pale small oranges here and there, the dominant smell of red herrings, denied the lurking of an angelical presence behind them.

Sarah Winch and a boy served at the counter. Sarah led the Mr. Woodseers into a corner knocked off the shop and called a room. Below the top bars of a wizened grate was a chilly fire. London's light came piecemeal through a smut-streaked window. If the wonderful was to occur, this was the place to heighten it.

'My son may be an intruder,' Mr. Woodseer said. 'He is acquainted with a Lord Fleetwood . . .'

'Madge will know, sir,' replied Sarah, and she sent up a shrill cry for Madge from the foot of the stairs.

The girl ran down swiftly. She entered listening to Sarah, looking at Gower; to whom, after a bob and pained smile where reverence was owing, she said, 'Can you tell me, sir, please, where we can find Lord Fleetwood now?'

Gower was unable to tell. Madge turned to Mr. Woodseer, saying soon after: 'Oh, she won't mind;

she 'll be glad, if he knows Lord Fleetwood. I 'll fetch her.'

The moments were of the palpitating order for Gower, although his common sense lectured the wildest of hearts for expecting such a possibility as the presence of his lofty lady here.

And, of course, common sense proved to be right: the lady was quite another. But she struck on a sleeping day of his travels. Her face was not one to be forgotten, and to judge by her tremble of a smile, she remembered him instantly.

They were soon conversing, each helping to paint the scene of the place where they had met.

'Lord Fleetwood has married me,' she said.

Gower bent his head; all stood silent.

'May I?' said Madge to her. 'It is Lord Fleetwood's wedded wife, sir. He drove her from her uncle's, on her wedding day, the day of a prize-fight, where I was; he told me to wait on his lady at an inn there, as I 've done and will. He drove away that evening, and he hasn't'—the girl's black eyebrows worked: 'I 've not seen him since. He 's a great nobleman, yes. He left his lady at the inn, expenses paid. He left her with no money. She stayed on till her heart was breaking. She has come to London to find him. She had to walk part of the way. She has only a change of linen we brought in a parcel. She 's a stranger to England: she knows nobody in London. She had no place to come to but this poor hole of ours she 's so good as let welcome her. We can't do better, and it 's no use to be ashamed. She 's not a lady to scorn poor people.'

The girl's voice hummed through Gower.

He said: 'Lord Fleetwood may not be in London,' and chafed at himself for such a quaver.

'It's his house we want, sir, he has not been at his house in Kent. We want his London house.'

'My dear lady,' said Mr. Woodseer; 'it might be as well to communicate the state of things to your family without delay. My son will call at any address you name; or if it is a country address, I can write the items, with my assurances of your safety under my charge, in my house, which I beg you to make your home. My housekeeper is known to Sarah and Madge for an excellent Christian woman.'

Carinthia replied: 'You are kind to me, sir. I am grateful. I have an uncle; I would not disturb my uncle; he is inventing guns and he wishes peace. It is my husband I have come to find. He did not leave me in anger.'

She coloured. With a dimple of tenderness at one cheek, looking from Sarah to Madge, she said: 'I would not leave my friends; they are sisters to me.'

Sarah, at these words, caught up her apron. Madge did no more than breathe deep and fast.

An unoccupied, cold parlour in Mr. Woodseer's house that would be heated for a guest, urged him to repeat his invitation, but he took the check from Gower, who suggested the doubt of Mary Jones being so good an attendant upon Lady Fleetwood as Madge. 'And Madge has to help in the shop at times.'

Madge nodded, looked into the eyes of her mistress, which sanctioned her saying: 'She will like it best here, she is my lady and I understand her best. My lady gives no trouble: she is hardy, she's not like other

ladies. I and Sarah sleep together in the room next. I can hear anything she wants. She takes us as if she was used to it.'

Sarah had to go to serve a customer. Madge made pretence of pricking her ears and followed into the shop.

'Your first visit to London is in ugly weather, Lady Fleetwood,' said Gower.

'It is my first,' she answered.

How the marriage came about, how the separation, could not be asked and was not related.

'Our district is not all London, my dear lady,' said Mr. Woodseer. 'Good hearts are here, as elsewhere, and as many, if one looks behind the dirt. I have found it since I laboured amongst them, now twenty years. Unwashed human nature, though it is natural to us to wash, is the most human, we find.'

Gower questioned the naturalness of human nature's desire to wash; and they wrangled good-humouredly, Carinthia's eyes dwelling on them each in turn; until Mr. Woodseer, pursuing the theme started by him to interest her, spoke of consolations derived from his labours here, in exchange for the loss of his mountains. Her face lightened.

'You love the mountains?'

'I am a son of the mountains.'

'Ah, I love them! Father called me a daughter of the mountains. I was born in the mountains. I was leaving my mountains on the day, I think it yesterday, when I met this gentleman who is your son.'

'A glorious day it was!' Gower exclaimed.

'It was a day of great glory for me,' said Carinthia. 'Your foot did not pain you for long?'

'The length of two pipes. You were with your brother.'

'With my brother. My brother has married a most beautiful lady. He is now travelling his happy time—my Chillon!'

There came a radiance on her under-eyelids. There was no weeping.

Struck by the contrast between the two simultaneous honeymoons, and a vision of the high-spirited mountain girl, seen in this place a young bride seeking her husband, Gower Woodseer could have performed that unphilosophical part. He had to shake himself. She seemed really a soaring bird brought down by the fowler.

Lord Fleetwood's manner of abandoning her was the mystery.

Gower stood waiting for her initiative, when the minister interposed: 'There are books, books of our titled people—the Peers, books of the Peerage. They would supply the address. My son will discover where to examine them. He will find the address. Most of the great noblemen have a London house.'

'My husband has a house in London,' Carinthia said.

'I know him, to some degree,' said Gower.

She remarked: 'I have heard that you do.'

Her lips were shut, as to any hint at his treatment of her.

Gower went into the shop to speak with Madge. The girl was talking in the business tone to customers; she finished her commission hurriedly and joined him on the pavement by the doorstep. Her voice was like the change for the swing of a door from street to temple.

'You've seen how brave she is, sir. She has things to bear. Never cries, never frets. Her marriage day —leastways . . . I can't, no girl can tell. A great nobleman, yes. She waited, believing in him; she does. She hasn't spoken to me of what she's had to bear. I don't know; I guess; I'm sure I'm right— and him a man! Girls learn to know men, call them gentlemen or sweeps. She thinks she has only to meet him to persuade him she's fit to be loved by him. She thinks of love. Would he—our tongues are tied except among ourselves to a sister. Leaves her by herself, with only me, after—it knocks me dumb! Many a man commits a murder wouldn't do that. She could force him to—no, it isn't a house she wants, she wants *him*. He's her husband, Mr. Woodseer. You will do what you can to help; I judge by your father. I and Sarah'll slave for her to be as comfortable as we can make her; we can't give her what she's used to. I shall count the hours.'

'You sold me apples when your head was just above the counter,' said Gower.

'Did I?—you won't lose time, sir?' she rejoined. 'Her box is down at the beastly inn in Kent. Kind people, I dare say; their bill was paid any extent, they said. She walked to his big house Esslemont for news of him. And I'm not a snivelling wench either; but she speaks of him a way to make a girl drink her tears, if they ain't to be let fall.'

'But you had a victory down there,' Gower hinted congratulations.

'Ah,' said she.

'Christopher Ines is all right now?'

'I've as good as lost my good name for Kit Ines, Mr. Woodseer.'

'Not with my dad, Madge.'

'The minister reads us at the heart. Shall we hear the street of his house in London before night?'

'I may be late.'

'I'll be up, any hour, for a rap at the shutters. I want to take her to the house early next morning. She won't mind the distance. She lies in bed, her eyes shut or open, never sleeping, hears any mouse. It shouldn't go on, if we can do a thing to help.'

'I'm off,' said Gower, unwontedly vexed at his empty pocket, that could not offer the means for conveyance to a couple of young women.

The dark-browed girl sent her straight eyes at him. They pushed him to hasten. On second thoughts, he stopped and hailed her; he was moved to confirm an impression of this girl's features.

His mind was directed to the business burning behind them, honestly enough, as soon as he had them in sight again.

'I ought to have the address of some of her people, in case,' he said.

'She won't go to her uncle, I'm sure of that,' said Madge. 'He's a lord and can't be worried. It's her husband to find first.'

'If he's to be found!—he's a lord, too. Has she no other relatives or friends?'

'She loves her brother. He's an officer. He's away on honeymoon. There's an admiral down Hampshire way, a place I've been near and seen. I'd not have you go to any of them, sir, without trying all we can do to find Lord Fleetwood. It's Admiral Fakenham

she speaks of; she 's fond of him. She 's not minded to bother any of her friends about herself.'

'I shall see you to-night,' said Gower, and set his face Westward, remembering that his father had named Caermarthen as her mother's birthplace.

Just in that tone of hers do Welshwomen talk of their country; of its history, when at home, of its mountains, when exiled: and in a language like hers, bare of superlatives to signify an ardour conveyed by the fire of the breath. Her quick devotion to a lady exciting enthusiasm through admiring pity for the grace of a much-tried quiet sweetness, was explained; apart from other reasons, feminine or hidden, which might exist. Only a Welsh girl would be so quick and all in it, with a voice intimating a heated cauldron under her mouth. None but a Welsh-blooded girl, risking her good name to follow and nurse the man she considered a hero, would carry her head to look virgin eyes as she did. One could swear to them, Gower thought. Contact with her spirited him out of his mooniness.

He had the Cymric and Celtic respect of character, which puts aside the person's environments to face the soul. He was also an impressionable fellow among his fellows, a philosopher only at his leisure, in his courted solitudes. Getting away some strides from this girl of the drilling voice,—the shudder-voice, he phrased it,—the lady for whom she pleaded came clearer into his view and gradually absorbed him; though it was an emulation with the girl Madge, of which he was a trifle conscious, that drove him to do his work of service in the directest manner. He then fancied the girl had caught something of the tone of her lady: the

savage intensity or sincerity; and he brooded on Carinthia's position, the mixture of the astounding and the woful in her misadventure. One could almost laugh at our human fate, to think of a drop off the radiant mountain heights upon a Whitechapel greengrocer's shop, gathering the title of countess midway.

But nothing of the ludicrous touched her; no, and if we bring reason to scan our laugh at pure humanity, it is we who are in the place of the ridiculous, for doing what reason disavows. Had he not named her, *Carinthia, Saint and Martyr*, from a first perusal of her face? And Lord Fleetwood had read and repeated it. Lord Fleetwood had become the instrument to martyrize her? That might be; there was a hoard of bad stuff in his composition besides the precious: and this was a nobleman owning enormous wealth, who could vitiate himself by disposing of a multitude of men and women to serve his will, a shifty will. Wealth creates the magician, and may breed the fiend within him. In the hands of a young man, wealth is an invitation to devilry. Gower's idea of the story of Carinthia inclined to charge Lord Fleetwood with very possible false dealing. He then quashed the charge, and decided to wait for information.

At the second of the aristocratic Clubs of London's West, into which he stepped like an easy member, the hall-porter did not examine his clothing from German hat to boots, and gave him Lord Fleetwood's town address. He could tell Madge at night by the door of the shuttered shop, that Lord Fleetwood had gone down to Wales.

'It means her having to wait,' she said. 'The minister has been to the coach-office, to order up her

box from that inn. He did it in his name; they can't refuse; no money 's owing. She must have a change. Sally has fifteen pounds locked up in case of need.'

Sally's capacity and economy fetched the penniless philosopher a slap.

'You've taken to this lady,' he said.

'She held my hand while Kit Ines was at his work; and I was new to her, and a prize-fighter's lass, they call me:—upon the top of that nobleman's coach, where he made me sit, behind her, to see the fight; and she his wedded lady that morning. A queer groom. He may keep Kit Ines from drink, he's one of you men, and rides over anything in his way. I can't speak about it; I could swear it before a judge, from what I know. Those Rundles at that inn don't hear anything it suits him to do. All the people down in those parts are slaves to him. And I thought he was a real St. George before,—yes, ready I was to kiss the ground his feet crossed. If you could, it 's Chinningfold near where Admiral Fakenham lives, down Hampshire way. Her friends ought to hear what 's happened to her. They 'll find her in a queer place. She might go to the minister's. I believe she's happier with us girls.'

Gower pledged his word to start for Chinningfold early as the light next day. He liked the girl the better, in an amicable fashion, now that his nerves had got free of the transient spell of her kettle tone—the hardly varied one note of a heart boiling with sisterly devotion to a misused stranger of her sex;—and, after the way of his race, imagination sprang up in him, at the heels of the quieted senses, releasing him from the personal and physical to grasp the general situation and place the protagonist foremost.

He thought of Carinthia, with full vision of her. Some wrong had been done, or some violation of the right, to guess from the girl Madge's molten words in avoidance of the very words. It implied—though it might be but one of Love's shrewder discords—such suspected traitorous dealing of a man with their sister woman as makes the world of women all woman toward her. They can be that, and their being so illuminates their hidden sentiments in relation to the mastering male, whom they uphold.

But our uninformed philosopher was merely picking up scraps of sheddings outside the dark wood of the mystery they were to him, and playing imagination upon them. This primary element of his nature soon enthroned his chosen lady above their tangled obscurities. Beneath her tranquil beams, with the rapture of the knowledge that her name on earth was Livia, he threaded East London's thoroughfares, on a morning when day and night were made one by fog, to journey down to Chinningfold, by coach, in the service of the younger Countess of Fleetwood, whose right to the title he did not doubt, though it directed surprise movements at his understanding from time to time.

CHAPTER XX

STUDIES IN FOG, GOUT, AN OLD SEAMAN, A LOVELY SERPENT, AND THE MORAL EFFCTS THAT MAY COME OF A BORROWED SHIRT

Money of his father's enabled Gower to take the coach; and studies in fog, from the specked brown to

the woolly white and the dripping torn, were proposed to the traveller, whose preference of Nature's face did not arrest his observation of her domino and petticoats; across which blank sheets he curiously read backward, that he journeyed by the aid of his father's hard-earned, ungrudged piece of gold. Without it, he would have been useless in this case of need. The philosopher could starve with equanimity, and be the stronger. But one had, it seemed here clearly, to put on harness and trudge along a line, if the unhappy were to have one's help. Gradual experiences of his business among his fellows were teaching an exercised mind to learn in regions where minds unexercised were doctorial giants beside it.

The study of gout was offered at Chinningfold. Admiral Fakenham's butler refused at first to take a name to his master. Gower persisted, stating the business of his mission; and in spite of the very suspicious glib good English spoken by a man wearing such a hat and suit, the butler was induced to consult Mrs. Carthew.

She sprang up alarmed. After having seen the young lady happily married and off with her lordly young husband, the arrival of a messenger from the bride gave a stir the wrong way to her flowing recollections; the scenes and incidents she had smothered under her love of the comfortable stood forth appallingly. The messenger, the butler said, was no gentleman. She inspected Gower and heard him speak. An anomaly had come to the house; for he had the language of a gentleman, the appearance of a nondescript; he looked indifferent, he spoke sympathetically; and he was frank as soon as the butler was out

of hearing. In return for the compliment, she invited him to her sitting-room. The story of the young countess, whom she had seen driven away by her husband from the church in a coach and four, as being now destitute, praying to see her friends, in the Whitechapel of London—the noted haunt of thieves and outcasts, bankrupts and the abandoned; set her asking for the first time, who was the man with dreadful countenance inside the coach? A previously disregarded horror of a man. She went trembling to the admiral, though his health was delicate, his temper excitable. It was, she considered, an occasion for braving the doctor's interdict.

Gower was presently summoned to the chamber where Admiral Fakenham reclined on cushions in an edifice of an arm-chair. He told a plain tale. Its effect was to straighten the admiral's back, and enlarge in grey glass a pair of sea-blue eyes. And, 'What's that? Whitechapel?' the admiral exclaimed,—at high pitch, far above his understanding. The particulars were repeated, whereupon the sick-room shook with, 'Greengrocer?' He stunned himself with another of the monstrous points in his pet girl's honeymoon: 'A prize-fight?'

To refresh a saving incredulity, he took a closer view of the messenger. Gower's habiliments were those of the 'queer fish,' the admiral saw. But the meeting at Carlsruhe was recalled to him, and there was a worthy effort to remember it. 'Prize-fight!—Greengrocer!—Whitechapel!' he rang the changes rather more moderately; till, swelling and purpling, he cried: 'Where's the husband?'

That was the emissary's question likewise.

'If I could have found him, sir, I should not have troubled you.'

'Disappeared? Plays the man of his word, then plays the madman! Prize-fight the first day of her honeymoon? Good Lord! Leaves her at the inn?'

'She was left.'

'When was she left?'

'As soon as the fight was over—as far as I understand.'

The admiral showered briny masculine comments on that bridegroom.

'Her brother's travelling somewhere in the Pyrenees—married my daughter. She has an uncle, a hermit.' He became pale. 'I must do it. The rascal insults us all. Flings her off the day he married her! It's a slap in the face to all of us. You are acquainted with the lady, sir. Would you call her a red-haired girl?'

'Red-gold of the ballads; chestnut-brown, with threads of fire.'

'She has the eyes for a man to swear by. I feel the loss of her, I can tell you. She was wine and no penalty to me. Is she much broken under it?—if I 'm to credit . . . I suppose I must. It floors me.'

Admiral Baldwin's frosty stare returned on him. Gower caught an image of it, as comparable, without much straining, to an Arctic region smitten by the beams.

'Nothing breaks her courage,' he said.

'To be sure, my poor dear! Who could have guessed when she left my house she was on her way to a prize-fight and a greengrocer's in Whitechapel. But the dog's not mad, though his bite's bad; he's an eccentric mongrel. He wants the whip; ought to have

had it regularly from his first breeching. He shall whistle for her when he repents; and he will, mark me. This gout here will be having a snap at the vitals if I don't start to-night. Oblige me, half a minute.'

The admiral stretched his hand for an arm to give support, stood, and dropped into the chair, signifying a fit of giddiness in the word 'Head.'

Before the stupor had passed, Mrs. Carthew entered, anxious lest the admittance of a messenger of evil to her invalid should have been an error of judgment. The butler had argued it with her. She belonged to the list of persons appointed to cut life's thread when it strains, their general kindness being so liable to misdirection.

Gower left the room and went into the garden. He had never seen a death; and the admiral's peculiar pallor intimated events proper to days of cold mist and a dripping stillness. How we go, was the question among his problems:—if we are to go! his youthful frame insistingly added.

The fog down a wet laurel-walk contracted his mind with the chilling of his blood, and he felt that he would have to see the thing if he was to believe in it. Of course he believed, but life throbbed rebelliously, and a picture of a desk near a lively fire-grate, books and pen and paper, and a piece of writing to be approved of by the Hesper of ladies, held ground with a pathetic heroism against the inevitable. He got his wits to the front by walking faster; and then thought of the young countess and the friend she might be about to lose. She could number her friends on her fingers. Admiral Fakenham's exclamations of the name of the place where she now was, conveyed an inky idea

of the fall she had undergone. Counting her absent brother, with himself, his father, and the two Whitechapel girls, it certainly was an unexampled fall, to say of her, that they and those two girls had become by the twist of circumstances the most serviceable of her friends.

Her husband was the unriddled riddle we have in the wealthy young lord,—burning to possess, and making tatters of all he grasped, the moment it was his own. Glints of the devilish had shot from him at the gaming-tables,—fine haunts for the study of our lower man. He could be magnificent in generosity; he had little humaneness. He coveted beauty in women hungrily, and seemed to be born hostile to them; or so Gower judged by the light of the later evidence on unconsidered antecedent observations of him. Why marry her to cast her off instantly? The crude philosopher asked it as helplessly as the admiral. And, further, what did the girl Madge mean by the drop of her voice to a hum of enforced endurance under injury, like the furnace behind an iron door? Older men might have understood, as he was aware; he might have guessed, only he had the habit of scattering meditation upon the game of hawk and fowl.

Dame Gossip boils. Her one idea of animation is to have her *dramatis personæ* in violent motion, always the biggest foremost; and, indeed, that is the way to make them credible, for the wind they raise and the succession of collisions. The fault of the method is, that they do not instruct; so the breath is out of them before they are put aside; for the uninstructive are the humanly deficient: they remain with us like the tolerated old aristocracy, which may not govern, and is but socially

seductive. The deuteragonist or secondary person can at times tell us more of them than circumstances at furious heat will help them to reveal; and the Dame will have him only as an index-post. Hence her endless ejaculations over the mystery of Life, the inscrutability of character,—in a plain world, in the midst of such readable people! To preserve Romance (we exchange a sky for a ceiling if we let it go), we must be inside the heads of our people as well as the hearts, more than shaking the kaleidoscope of hurried spectacles, in days of a growing activity of the head.

Gower Woodseer could not know that he was drawn on to fortune and the sight of his Hesper by Admiral Fakenham's order that the visitor was to stay at his house until he should be able to quit his bed, and journey with him to London, doctor or no doctor. The doctor would not hear of it. The admiral threatened it every night for the morning, every morning for the night; and Gower had to submit to postponements balefully affecting his linen. Remonstrance was not to be thought of; for at a mere show of reluctance the courtly admiral flushed, frowned, and beat the bed where he lay, a gouty volcano. Gower's one shirt was passing through the various complexions, and had approached the Nubian on its way to negro. His natural candour checked the downward course. He mentioned to Mrs. Carthew, with incidental gravity, on a morning at breakfast, that this article of his attire 'was beginning to resemble London snow.' She was amused; she promised him a change more resembling country snow.

'It will save me from buttoning so high up,' he said, as he thanked her.

She then remembered the daily increase of stiffness in his figure: and a reflection upon his patient waiting, and simpleness, and lexicographer speech to expose his minor needs, touched her unused sense of humour on the side where it is tender in women, from being motherly.

In consequence, she spoke of him with a pleading warmth to the Countess Livia, who had come down to see the admiral 'concerning an absurd but annoying rumour running over London.' Gower was out for a walk. He knew of the affair, Mrs. Carthew said, for an introduction to her excuses of his clothing.

'But I know the man,' said Livia. 'Lord Fleetwood picked him up somewhere, and brought him to us. Clever. Why, is he here?'

'He is here, sent to the admiral, as I understand, my lady.'

'Sent by whom?'

Having but a weak vocabulary to defend a delicate position, Mrs. Carthew stuttered into evasions, after the way of ill-armed persons; and naming herself a stranger to the circumstances, she feebly suggested that the admiral ought not to be disturbed before the doctor's next visit; Mr. Woodseer had been allowed to sit by his bed yesterday only for ten minutes, to divert him with his talk. She protected in this wretched manner the poor gentleman she sacrificed and emitted such a smell of secrecy, that Livia wrote three words on her card, for it to be taken to Admiral Baldwin at once. Mrs. Carthew supplicated faintly; she was unheeded.

The Countess of Fleetwood mounted the stairs—to descend them with the knowledge of her being the

Dowager Countess of Fleetwood! Henrietta had spoken of the Countess of Fleetwood's hatred of the title of Dowager. But when Lady Fleetwood had the fact from the admiral, would she forbear to excite him? If she repudiated it, she would provoke him to fire 'one of his broadsides,' as they said in the family, to assert it; and that might exhaust him; and there was peril in that. And who was guilty? Mrs. Carthew confessed her guilt, asking how it could have been avoided. She made appeal to Gower on his return, transfixing him.

Not only is he no philosopher who has an idol, he has to learn that he cannot think rationally; his due sense of weight and measure is lost, the choice of his thoughts as well. He was in the house with his devoutly, simply worshipped, pearl of women, and his whole mind fell to work without ado upon the extravagant height of the admiral's shirt-collar cutting his ears. The very beating of his heart was perplexed to know whether it was for rapture or annoyance. As a result he was but histrionically master of himself when the Countess Livia or the nimbus of the lady appeared in the room.

She received his bow; she directed Mrs. Carthew to have the doctor summoned immediately. The remorseful woman flew.

'Admiral Fakenham is very ill, Mr. Woodseer, he has had distracting news. Oh, no, the messenger is not blamed. You are Lord Fleetwood's friend and will not allow him to be prejudged. He will be in town shortly. I know him well, you know him; and could you hear him accused of cruelty—and to a woman? He is the soul of chivalry. So, in his way, is the admiral. If he

were only more patient! Let us wait for Lord Fleetwood's version. I am certain it will satisfy me. The admiral wishes you to step up to him. Be very quiet; you will be; consent to everything. I was unaware of his condition: the things I heard were incredible. I hope the doctor will not delay. Now go. Beg to retire soon.'

Livia spoke under her breath; she had fears.

Admiral Baldwin lay in his bed, submitting to a nurse-woman—sign of extreme exhaustion. He plucked strength from the sight of Gower and bundled the woman out of the room, muttering: 'Kill myself? Not half so quick as they'd do it. I can't rest for that Whitechapel of yours. Please fetch pen and paper: it's a letter.'

The letter began, 'Dear Lady Arpington.'

The dictation of it came in starts. At one moment it seemed as if life's ending shook the curtains on our stage and were about to lift. An old friend in the reader of the letter would need no excuse for its jerky brevity. It said that his pet girl, Miss Kirby, was married to the Earl of Fleetwood in the first week of last month, and was now to be found at a shop No. 45 Longways, Whitechapel; that the writer was ill, unable to stir; that he would be in London within eight-and-forty hours at furthest. He begged Lady Arpington to send down to the place and have the young countess fetched to her, and keep her until he came.

Admiral Baldwin sat up to sign the letter.

'Yes, and write "miracles happen when the devil's abroad"—done it!' he said, sinking back. 'Now seal, you'll find wax—the ring at my watch-chain.'

He sighed, as it were the sound of his very last; he lay like a sleeper twitched by a dream. There had been a scene with Livia. The dictating of the letter took his remainder of strength out of him.

Gower called in the nurse, and went downstairs. He wanted the address of Lady Arpington's town house.

'You have a letter for her?' said Livia, and held her hand for it in a way not to be withstood.

'There 's no superscription,' he remarked.

'I will see to that, Mr. Woodseer.'

'I fancy I am bound, Lady Fleetwood.'

'By no means.' She touched his arm. 'You are Lord Fleetwood's friend.'

A slight convulsion of the frame struck the admiral's shirt-collar at his ears; it virtually prostrated him under foot of a lady so benign in overlooking the spectacle he presented. Still, he considered; he had wits alive enough just to perceive a duty.

'The letter was entrusted to me, Lady Fleetwood.'

'You are afraid to entrust it to the post?'

'I was thinking of delivering it myself in town.'

'You will entrust it to me.'

'Anything on earth of my own.'

'The treasure would be valued. This you confide to my care.'

'It is important.'

'No.'

'Indeed it is.'

'Say that it is, then. It is quite safe with me. It may be important that it should not be delivered. Are you not Lord Fleetwood's friend? Lady Arpington is not so very, very prominent in the list with you and me.

Besides, I don't think she has come to town yet. She generally sees out the end of the hunting season. Leave the letter to me: it shall go. You, with your keen observation missing nothing, have seen that my uncle has not his whole judgment at present. There are two sides to a case. Lord Fleetwood's friend will know that it would be unfair to offer him up to his enemies while he is absent. Things going favourably here, I drive back to town to-morrow, and I hope you will accept a seat in my carriage.'

He delivered his courtliest; he was riding on cloud.

They talked of Baden. His honourable surrender of her defeated purse was a subject for gentle humour with her, venturesome compliment with him. He spoke well; and though his hands were clean of Sir Meeson Corby's reproach of them, the caricature of presentable men blushed absurdly and seemed uneasy in his monstrous collar. The touching of him again would not be required to set him pacing to her steps. His hang of the head testified to the unerring stamp of a likeness Captain Abrane could affix with a stroke: he looked the fiddler over his bow, playing wonderfully to conceal the crack of a string. The merit of being one of her army of admirers was accorded to him. The letter to Lady Arpington was retained.

Gower deferred the further mention of the letter until a visit to the admiral's chamber should furnish an excuse; and he had to wait for it. Admiral Baldwin's condition was becoming ominous. He sent messages downstairs by the doctor, forbidding his guest's departure until they two could make the journey together next day. The tortured and blissful young

man, stripped of his borrowed philosopher's cloak, hung conscience-ridden in this delicious bower, which was perceptibly an antechamber of the vaults, offering him the study he thirsted for, shrank from, and mixed with his cup of amorous worship.

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH WE HAVE FURTHER GLIMPSES OF THE WONDROUS MECHANISM OF OUR YOUNGER MAN

The report of Admiral Baldwin Fakenham as having died in the arms of a stranger visiting the house, hit nearer the mark than usual. He yielded his last breath as Gower Woodseer was lowering him to his pillow, shortly after a husky whisper of the letter to Lady Arpington; and that was one of Gower's crucial trials. It condemned him, for the pacifying of a dying man, to the murmur and shuffle, which was a lie; and the lie burnt him, contributed to the brand on his race. He and his father upheld a solitary bare staff, where the Cambrian flag had flown, before their people had been trampled in mire, to do as the worms. His loathing of any shadow of the lie was a protest on behalf of Welsh blood against an English charge, besides the passion for spiritual cleanliness: without which was no comprehension, therefore no enjoyment, of Nature possible to him. For Nature is the truth.

He begged the countess to let him have the letter; he held to the petition, with supplications; he spoke

of his pledged word, his honour; and her countenance did not deny to such an object as she beheld the right to a sense of honour. 'We all have the sentiment, I hope, Mr. Woodseer,' she said, stupefying the worshipper, who did not see it manifested. There was a look of gentle intimacy, expressive of common grounds between them, accompanying the dead words. Mistress of the letter, and the letter safe under lock, the admiral dead, she had not to bestow a touch of her hand on his coat-sleeve in declining to return it. A face languidly and benevolently querulous was bent on him, when he, so clever a man, resumed his very silly petition.

She was moon out of cloud at a change of the theme. Gower journeyed to London without the letter, intoxicated, and conscious of poison; enamoured of it, and straining for health. He had to reflect at the journey's end, that he had picked up nothing on the road, neither a thing observed nor a thing imagined; he was a troubled pool instead of a flowing river.

The best help to health for him was a day in his father's house. We are perpetually at our comparisons of ourselves with others; and they are mostly profitless; but the man carrying his religious light, to light the darkest ways of his fellows, and keeping good cheer, as though the heart of him ran a mountain water through the grimy region, plucked at Gower with an envy to resemble him in practice. His philosophy, too, reproached him for being outshone. Apart from his philosophy, he stood confessed a bankrupt; and it had dwindled to near extinction. Adoration of a woman takes the breath out of philosophy. And if one had only to say sheer donkey, he consenting to be driven by

her! One has to say worse in this case; for the words are, liar and traitor.

Carinthia's attitude toward his father conduced to his emulous respect for the old man, below whom, and indeed below the roadway of ordinary principles hedged with dull texts, he had strangely fallen. The sight of her lashed him. She made it her business or it was her pleasure to go the rounds beside Mr. Woodseer visiting his poor people. She spoke of the scenes she witnessed, and threw no stress on the wretchedness, having only the wish to assist in ministering. Probably the great wretchedness bubbling over the place blunted her feeling of loss at the word of Admiral Baldwin's end; her bosom sprang up: 'He was next to father,' was all she said; and she soon reverted to this and that house of the lodgings of poverty. She had descended on the world. There was of course a world outside Whitechapel, but Whitechapel was hot about her; the nests of misery, the sharp note of want in the air, tricks of an urchin who had amused her.

As to the place itself, she had no judgement to pronounce, except that: 'They have no mornings here;' and the childish remark set her quivering on her heights, like one seen through a tear, in Gower's memory. Scarce anything of her hungry impatience to meet her husband was visible: she had come to London to meet him; she hoped to meet him soon: before her brother's return, she could have added. She mentioned the goodness of Sarah Winch in not allowing that she was a burden to support. Money and its uses had impressed her; the quantity possessed by some, the utter need of it for the first of human purposes by others. Her speech was not of so halting or foreign

an English. She grew rapidly wherever she was planted.

Speculation on the conduct of her husband, empty as it might be, was necessitated in Gower. He pursued it, and listened to his father similarly at work: 'A young lady fit for any station, the kindest of souls, a born charitable human creature, void of pride, near in all she does and thinks to the Shaping Hand, why should her husband forsake her on the day of their nuptials! She is most gracious; the simplicity of an infant. Can you imagine the doing of an injury by a man to a woman like her?'

Then it was that Gower screwed himself to say:—

'Yes, I can imagine it, I 'm doing it myself. I shall be doing it till I 've written a letter and paid a visit.'

He took a meditative stride or two in the room, thinking without revulsion of the Countess Livia under a similitude of the bell of the plant henbane, and that his father had immunity from temptation because of the insensibility to beauty. Out of which he passed to the writing of the letter to Lord Fleetwood, informing his lordship that he intended immediately to deliver a message to the Marchioness of Arpington from Admiral Baldwin Fakenham, in relation to the Countess of Fleetwood. A duty was easily done by Gower when he had surmounted the task of conceiving his resolution to do it; and this task, involving an offence to the Lady Livia and intrusion of his name on a nobleman's recollection, ranked next in severity to the chopping off of his fingers by a man suspecting them of the bite of rabies.

An interview with Lady Arpington was granted him the following day.

She was a florid, aquiline, loud-voiced lady, evidently having no seat for her wonderments, after his account of the origin of his acquaintance with the admiral had quieted her suspicions. The world had only to stand beside her, and it would hear what she had heard. She rushed to the conclusion that Lord Fleetwood had married a person of no family.

'Really, really, that young man's freaks appear designed for the express purpose of heightening our amazement!' she exclaimed. 'He won't easily get beyond a wife in the east of London, at a *shop*; but there's no knowing. Any wish of Admiral Baldwin Fakenham's I hold sacred. At least I can see for myself. You can't tell me more of the facts? If Lord Fleetwood's in town, I will call him here at once. I will drive down to this address you give me. She is a civil person?'

'Her breeding is perfect,' said Gower.

'Perfect breeding, you say?' Lady Arpington was reduced to a murmur. She considered the speaker: his outlandish garb, his unprotesting self-possession. He spoke good English by habit, her ear told her. She was of an eminence to judge of a man impartially, even to the sufferance of an opinion from him, on a subject that lesser ladies would have denied to his clothing. Outwardly simple, naturally frank, though a tangle of the complexities inwardly, he was a touchstone for true aristocracy, as the humblest who bear the main elements of it must be. Certain humorous turns in his conversation won him an amicable smile when he bowed to leave: they were the needed finish of a favourable impression.

One day later the earl arrived in town, read Gower

Woodseer's brief words, and received the consequently expected summons, couched in a great lady's plain imperative. She was connected with his family on the paternal side.

He went obediently; not unwillingly, let the deputed historian of the Marriage, turning over documents, here say. He went to Lady Arpington disposed for marital humaneness and jog-trot harmony, by condescension; equivalent to a submitting to the drone of an incessant psalm at the drum of the ear. He was, in fact, rather more than inclined that way. When very young, at the age of thirteen, a mood of religious fervour had spiritualized the dulness of Protestant pew and pulpit for him. Another fit of it, in the Roman Catholic direction, had proposed, during his latest dilemma, to relieve him of the burden of his pledged word. He had plunged for a short space into the rapturous contemplation of a monastic life—'the clean soul for the macerated flesh,' as that fellow Woodseer said once: and such as his friend, the Roman Catholic Lord Feltre, moodily talked of getting in his intervals. He had gone down to a young and novel trial establishment of English penitents in the forest of a Midland county, and had watched and envied, and seen the escape from a lifelong bondage to the 'beautiful Gorgon,' under cover of a white flannel frock. The world pulled hard, and he gave his body into chains of a woman, to redeem his word.

But there was a plea on behalf of this woman. The life she offered might have psalmic iteration; the dead monotony of it in prospect did, nevertheless, exorcise a devil. Carinthia promised, it might seem, to chase and keep the black beast out of him permanently, as she

could, he now conceived: for since the day of the marriage with her, the devil inhabiting him had at least been easier, 'up in a corner.'

He held an individual memory of his bride, rose-veiled, secret to them both, that made them one, by subduing him. For it was a charm; an actual feminine, an unanticipated personal, charm; past reach of tongue to name, wordless in thought. There, among the folds of the incense vapours of our heart's holy of holies, it hung; and it was rare, it was distinctive of her, and alluring, if one consented to melt to it, and accepted for compensation the exorcising of a devil.

Oh, but no mere devil by title!—a very devil. It was alert and frisky, flushing, filling the thin cold idea of Henrietta at a thought; and in the thought it made Carinthia's intimate charm appear as no better than a thing to enrich a beggar, while he knew that kings could never command the charm. Not love, only the bathing in Henrietta's incomparable beauty and the desire to be, desire to have been, the casket of it, broke the world to tempest and lightnings at a view of Henrietta the married woman—married to the brother of the woman calling him husband:—'It is my husband.' The young tyrant of wealth could have avowed that he did not love Henrietta; but not the less was he in the swing of a whirlwind at the hint of her loving the man she had married. Did she? It might be tried.

She? That Henrietta is one of the creatures who love pleasure, love flattery, love their beauty: they cannot love a man. Or the love is a ship that will not sail a sea.

Now, if the fact were declared and attested, if her

shallowness were seen proved, one might get free of the devil she plants in the breast. Absolutely to despise her would be release, and it would allow of his tasting Carinthia's charm, reluctantly acknowledged; not 'money of the country' beside that golden Henrietta's.

Yet who can say?—women are such deceptions. Often their fairest, apparently sweetest, when brought to the keenest of the tests, are graceless; or worse, artificially consonant; in either instance barren of the poetic. Thousands of the confidently expectant among men have been unbewitched; a lamentable process; and the grimly reticent and the loudly discursive are equally eloquent of the pretty general disillusion. How they loathe and tear the mask of the sham attraction that snatched them to the hag yoke, and fell away to show its grisly horrors within the round of the month, if not the second enumeration of twelve by the clock! Fleetwood had heard certain candid seniors talk, delivering their minds in superior appreciation of unpretentious boor wenches, nature's products, not esteemed by him. Well, of a truth, she—'Red Hair and Rugged Brows,' as the fellow Woodseer had called her, in alternation with 'Mountain Face to Sun'—she at the unveiling was gentle, surpassingly; graceful in the furnace of the trial. She wore through the critic ordeal his burning sensitiveness to grace and delicacy cast about a woman, and was rather better than not withered by it.

On the borders between maidenly and wifely, she, a thing of flesh like other daughters of earth, had impressed her sceptical lord, inclining to contempt of her and detestation of his bargain, as a flitting hue,

ethereal, a transfiguration of earthliness in the core of the earthly furnace. And how?—but that it must have been the naked shining forth of her character, startled to show itself:—'It is my husband':—it must have been love.

The love that they versify, and strum on guitars, and go crazy over, and end by roaring at as the delusion; this common bloom of the ripeness of a season; this would never have utterly captured a sceptic, to vanquish him in his mastery, snare him in her surrender. It must have been the veritable passion: a flame kept alive by vestal ministrants in the yew-wood of the forest of Old Romance; planted only in the breasts of very favourite maidens. Love had eyes, love had a voice that night,—love was the explicable magic lifting terrestrial to seraphic. Though, true, she had not Henrietta's golden smoothness of beauty. Henrietta, illumined with such a love, would outdo all legends, all dreams of the tale of love. Would she? For credulous men she would be golden coin of the currency. She would not have a particular wild flavour: charm as of the running doe that has taken a dart and rolls an eye to burst the hunter's heart with pity.

Fleetwood went his way to Lady Arpington almost complacently, having fought and laid his wilder self. He might be likened to the doctor's patient entering the chemist's shop, with a prescription for a drug of healing virtue, upon which the palate is as little consulted as a robustious lollypop boy in the household of ceremonial parents, who have rung for the troop of their orderly domestics to sit in a row and hearken the intonation of good words.

CHAPTER XXII

A RIGHT-MINDED GREAT LADY

The bow, the welcome, and the introductory remarks passed rapidly as the pull at two sides of a curtain opening on a scene that stiffens courtliness to hard attention.

After the names of Admiral Baldwin and 'the Mr. Woodseer,' the name of Whitechapel was mentioned by Lady Arpington. It might have been the name of any other place.

'Ah, so far, then, I have to instruct you,' she said, observing the young earl. 'I drove down there yesterday. I saw the lady calling herself Countess of Fleetwood. By right? She was a Miss Kirby.'

'She has the right,' Fleetwood said, standing well up out of a discharge of musketry.

'Marriage not contested. You knew of her being in that place?—I can't describe it.'

'Your ladyship will pardon me?'

London's frontier of barbarism was named for him again, and in a tone to penetrate.

He refrained from putting the question of how she had come there.

As iron as he looked, he said: 'She stays there by choice.'

The great lady tapped her foot on the floor.

'You are not acquainted with the district.'

'One of my men comes out of it.'

'The coming out of it! . . . However, I understand her story, that she travelled from a village inn,

where she had been left — without resources. She waited weeks; I forget how many. She has a description of maid in attendance on her. She came to London to find her husband. You were at the mines, we heard. Her one desire is to meet her husband. But, goodness! Fleetwood, why do you frown? You acknowledge the marriage, she has the name of the church; she was married out of that old Lord Levellier's house. You drove her—I won't repeat the flighty business. You left her, and she did her best to follow you. Will the young men of our time not learn that life is no longer a game when they have a woman for partner in the match! You don't complain of her flavour of a foreign manner? She can't be so very . . . Admiral Baldwin's daughter has married her brother; and he is a military officer. She has germs of breeding, wants only a little rub of the world to smooth her. Speak to the point:—do you meet her here? Do you refuse?'

'At present? I do.'

'Something has to be done.'

'She was bound to stay where I left her.'

'You are bound to provide for her becomingly.'

'Provision shall be made, of course.'

'The story will . . . unless—and quickly, too.'

'I know, I know!'

Fleetwood had the clang of all the bells of London chiming Whitechapel at him in his head, and he betrayed the irritated tyrant ready to decree fire and sword, for the defence or solace of his tender sensibilities.

The black flash flew.

'It's a thing to mend, as well as one can,' Lady

Arpington said. 'I am not inquisitive: you had your reasons or chose to act without any. Get her away from that place. She won't come to me unless it 's to meet her husband. Ah, well, temper does not solve your problem; husband you are, if you married her. We 'll leave the husband undiscussed: with this reserve, that it seems to me men are now beginning to play the misunderstood.'

'I hope they know themselves better,' said Fleetwood; and he begged for the name and number of the house in the Whitechapel street, where she who was discernibly his enemy, and the deadliest of enemies, had now her dwelling.

Her immediate rush to that place, the fixing of herself there for an assault on him, was a move worthy the daughter of the rascal Old Buccaneer; it compelled to urgent measures. He, as he felt horribly in pencilling her address, acted under compulsion; and a woman prodded the goad. Her mask of ingenuousness was flung away for a look of craft, which could be power; and with her changed aspect his tolerance changed to hatred.

'A shop,' Lady Arpington explained for his better direction: 'potatoes, vegetable stuff. Honest people, I am to believe. She is indifferent to her food, she says. She works, helping one of their ministers—one of their denominations: heaven knows what they call themselves! Anything to escape from the Church! She 's likely to become a Methodist. With Lord Feltre proselytizing for his Papist creed, Lord Pitscrew a declared Mohammedan, we shall have a pretty English aristocracy in time. Well, she may claim to belong to it now. She would not be persuaded against

visitations to pestiferous hovels. What else is there to do in such a place? She goes about catching diseases to avoid bilious melancholy in the dark back room of a small greengrocer's shop in Whitechapel. There you have the word for the Countess of Fleetwood's present address.'

It drenched him with ridicule.

'I am indebted to your ladyship for the information,' he said, and maintained his rigidity.

The great lady stiffened.

'I am obliged to ask you whether you intend to act on it at once. The admiral has gone; I am in some sort deputed as a guardian to her, and I warn you—very well, very well. In your own interests, it will be. If she is left there another two or three days, the name of the place will stick to her.'

'She has baptized herself with it already, I imagine,' said Fleetwood. 'She will have Esslemont to live in.'

'There will be more than one to speak as to that. You should know her.'

'I do not know her.'

'You married her.'

'The circumstances are admitted.'

'If I may hazard a guess, she is unlikely to come to terms without a previous interview. She is bent on meeting you.'

'I am to be subjected to further annoyance, or she will take the name of the place she at present inhabits, and bombard me with it. Those are the terms.'

'She has a brother living, I remind you.'

'State the deduction, if you please, my lady.'

'She is not of a totally inferior family.'

'She had a father famous over England as the Old

Buccaneer, and is a diligent reader of his book of MAXIMS FOR MEN.'

'Dear me! Then Kirby—Captain Kirby! I remember. That's her origin, is it?' the great lady cried, illumined. 'My mother used to talk of the Cressett scandal. Old Lady Arpington, too. At any rate, it ended in their union—the formalities were properly respected, as soon as they could be.'

'I am unaware.'

'I detest such a tone of speaking. Speaking as you do now—married to the daughter? You are not yourself, Lord Fleetwood.'

'Quite, ma'am, let me assure you. Otherwise the Kirby-Cressetts would be dictating to me from the muzzle of one of the old rapscallion's Maxims. They will learn that I am myself.'

'You don't improve as you proceed. I tell you this, you'll not have me for a friend. You have your troops of satellites; but take it as equal to a prophecy, you won't have London with you; and you'll hear of Lord Fleetwood and his Whitechapel Countess till your ears ache.'

The preluding box on them reddened him.

'She will have the offer of Esslemont.'

'Undertake to persuade her in person.'

'I have spoken on that head.'

'Well, I may be mistaken,—I fancied it before I knew of the pair she springs from: you won't get her consent to anything without your consenting to meet her. Surely it's the manlier way. It might be settled for to-morrow, here, in this room. She prays to meet you.'

With an indicated gesture of 'Save me from it,' Fleetwood bowed.

He left no friend thinking over the riddle of his conduct. She was a loud-voiced lady, given to strike out phrases. The 'Whitechapel Countess' of the wealthiest nobleman of his day was heard by her on London's wagging tongue. She considered also that he ought at least have propitiated her; he was in the position requiring of him to do something of the kind, and he had shown instead the dogged pride which calls for a whip. Fool as he must have been to go and commit himself to marriage with a girl of whom he knew nothing or little, the assumption of pride belonged to the order of impudent disguises intolerable to behold and not, in a modern manner, castigate.

Notwithstanding a dislike of the Dowager Countess of Fleetwood, Lady Arpington paid Livia an afternoon visit; and added thereby to the stock of her knowledge and the grounds of her disapprobation.

Down in Whitechapel, it was known to the Winch girls and the Woodseers that Captain Kirby and his wife had spent the bitterest of hours in vainly striving to break their immovable sister's will to remain there.

At the tea-time of simple people, who make it a meal, Gower's appetite for the home-made bread of Mary Jones was checked by the bearer of a short note from Lord Fleetwood. The half-dozen lines were cordial, breathing of their walk in the Austrian highlands, and naming a renowned city hotel for dinner that day, the hour seven, the reply yes or no by messenger.

'But we are man to man, so there's no "No" between us two,' the note said, reviving a scene of rosy crag and pine forest, where there had been philosophical fun over the appropriate sexes of those our most

important fighting—ultimately, we will hope, to be united—syllables, and the when for men, the when for women, to select the one of them as their weapon.

Under the circumstances, Gower thought such a piece of writing to him magnanimous.

'It may be the solution,' his father remarked.

Both had the desire; and Gower's reply was the yes, our brave male word, supposed to be not so compromising to men in the employment of it as a form of acquiescence rather than insistent pressure.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN DAME GOSSIP'S VEIN

Right soon the London pot began to bubble. There was a marriage.

There are marriages by the thousand every day of the year that is not consecrated to prayer for the forgiveness of our sins, the Old Buccaneer, writing it with simple intent, says, by way of preface to a series of Maxims for men who contemplate acceptance of the yoke.

This was a marriage high as the firmament over common occurrences, black as Erebus to confound; it involved the wreck of expectations, disastrous eclipse of a sovereign luminary in the splendour of his rise, Phaethon's descent to the Shades through a smoking and a crackling world. Asserted here, verified there, the rumour gathered volume, and from a serpent of vapour resolved to sturdy concrete before it was tangible. Contradiction retired into corners, only to be

swept out of them. For this marriage, abominable to hear of, was of so wonderful a sort, that the story filled the mind, and the discrediting of the story threatened the great world's cranium with a vacuity yet more monstrously abominable.

For he, the planet Crœsus of his time, recently, scarce later than last night, a glorious object of the mid-heavens above the market, has been enveloped, caught, gobbled up by one of the nameless little witches riding after dusk the way of the wind on broomsticks—by one of *them!* She caught him like a fly in the hand off a pane of glass, gobbled him with the customary facility of a pecking pullet.

But was the planet Crœsus of his time a young man to be so caught, so gobbled?

There is the mystery of it. On his coming of age, that young man gave sign of his having a city head. He put his guardians deliberately aside, had his lawyers and bailiffs and stewards thoroughly under control: managed a particularly difficult step-mother; escaped the snares of her lovely cousin; and drove his team of sycophants exactly the road he chose to go and no other. He had a will.

The world accounted him wildish?

Always from his own offset, to his own ends. Never for another's dictation or beguilement. Never for a woman. He was born with a suspicion of the sex. Poetry decorated women, he said, to lime and drag men in the foulest ruts of prose.

We are to believe he has been effectively captured?

It is positively a marriage; he admits it.

Where celebrated?

There we are at hoodman-blind for the moment.

Three counties claim the church; two ends of London.

She is not a person of society, lineage?

Nor of beauty. She is a witch; ordinarily petticoated and not squeaking like a shrew-mouse in her flights, but not a whit less a moon-shade witch. The kind is famous. Fairy tales and terrible romances tell of her; she is just as much at home in life, and springs usually from the mire to enthral our knightliest. Is it a popular hero? She has him, sooner or later. A planet Crœsus? He falls to her.

That is, if his people fail to attach him in legal bonds to a damsel of a corresponding birth on the day when he is breeched.

Small is her need to be young—especially if it is the man who is very young. She is the created among women armed with the deadly instinct for the motive force in men, and shameless to attract it. Self-respecting women treat men as their tamed housemates. She blows the horn of the wild old forest, irresistible to the animal. O the droop of the eyelids, the curve of a lip, the rustle of silks, the much heart, the neat ankle; and the sparkling agreement, the reserve—the motherly feminine petition that she may retain her own small petted babe of an opinion, legitimate or not, by permission of superior authority!—proof at once of her intelligence and her appreciativeness. Her infinitesimal spells are seen; yet, despite experience, the magnetism in their repulsive display is barely apprehended by sedate observers until the astounding capture is proclaimed. It is visible enough then:—and O men! O morals! If she can but trick the smallest bit in stooping, she has the pick of men.

Our present sample shows her to be young: she is young and a foreigner. Mr. Chumley Potts vouches for it. Speaks foreign English. He thinks her more ninny than knave: she is the tool of a wily plotter, picked up off the highway road by Lord Fleetwood as soon as he had her in his eye. Sir Meeson Corby wrings his frilled hands to depict the horror of the hands of that tramp the young lord had her from. They afflict him malariously still. The man, he says, the man as well was an infatuation, because he talks like a Dictionary Cheap Jack, and may have had an education and dropped into vagrancy, owing to indiscretions. Lord Fleetwood ran about in Germany repeating his remarks. But the man is really an accomplished violinist, we hear. She dances the tambourine business. A sister of the man, perhaps, if we must be charitable. They are, some say, a couple of Hungarian gypsies Lord F. found at a show and brought over to England, and soon had it on his conscience that he ought to marry her, like the Quixote of honour that he is; which is equal to saying crazy, as there is no doubt his mother was.

The marriage is no longer disputable; poor Lady Fleetwood, whatever her faults as a stepmother, does no longer deny the celebration of a marriage; though she might reasonably discredit any such story if he, on the evening of the date of the wedding day, was at a ball, seen by her at the supper-table; and the next day he sat among the Peers and voted against the Government, and then went down to his estates in Wales, being an excellent holder of the reins, whether on the coach box or over the cash box.

More and more wonderful, we hear that he drove his

bride straight from the church to the field of a prize-fight, arranged for her special delectation. She dotes on seeing blood-shed and drinking champagne. Young Mr. Mallard is our authority; and he says, she enjoyed it, and cheered the victor for being her husband's man. And after the shocking exhibition, good-bye; the Countess of Fleetwood was left sole occupant of a wayside inn, and may have learnt in her solitude that she would have been wise to feign disgust; for men to the smallest degree cultivated are unable to pardon a want of delicacy in the woman who has chosen them, as they are taught to think by their having chosen her.

So talked, so twittered, piped and croaked the London world over the early rumours of the marriage, this Amazing Marriage; which it got to be called, from the number of items flocking to swell the wonder.

Ravens ravening by night, poised peregrines by day, provision-merchants for the dispensing of dainty scraps to tickle the ears, to arm the tongues, to explode reputations, those great ladies, the Ladies Endor, Eldritch, and Cowry, fateful three of their period, avenged and scourged both innocence and naughtiness; innocence, on the whole, the least, when their withering suspicion of it had hunted the unhappy thing to the bank of Ophelia's ditch. Mallard and Chumley Potts, Captain Abrane, Sir Meeson Corby, Lord Brailstone, were plucked at and rattled, put to the blush, by a pursuit of inquiries conducted with beaks. High-nosed dames will surpass eminent judges in their temerity on the border-line where *Ahem* sounds the warning note to curtained decency. The courtly M. de St. Ombre had to stand confused. He, however, gave another version of Captain Abrane's 'fiddler,' and precipitated the

great ladies into the reflection, that French gentlemen, since the execrable French Revolution, have lost their proper sense of the distinctions of Class. *Homme d'esprit*, applied to a roving adventurer, a scarce other than vagabond, was either an undiscriminating epithet or else a further example of the French deficiency in humour.

Dexterous contriver, he undoubtedly is. Lady Cowry has it from Sir Meeson Corby, who had it from the poor dowager, that Lord Fleetwood has installed the man in his house and sits him at the opposite end of his table; fished him up from Whitchapel, where the countess is left serving oranges at a small fruit-shop. With her own eyes, Lady Arpington saw her there; and she can't be got to leave the place unless her husband drives his coach down to fetch her. That he declines to do; so she remains the Whitechapel Countess, all on her hind heels against the offer of a shilling of her husband's money, if she 's not to bring him to his knees; and goes about at night with a low Methodist singing hymns along those dreadful streets, while Lord Fleetwood gives gorgeous entertainments. One signal from the man he has hired, and he stops drinking; he will stop speaking as soon as the man's mouth is open. He is under a complete fascination, attributable, some say, to passes of the hands, which the man won't wash lest he should weaken their influence.

For it cannot be simply his violin playing. They say he was a pupil of a master of the dark art in Germany, and can practise on us to make us think his commonest utterances extraordinarily acute and precious. Lord Fleetwood runs round quoting him to everybody, quite ridiculously. But the man's

influence is sufficient to induce his patron to drive down and fetch the Whitechapel Countess home in state, as she insists—if the man wishes it. Depend upon it he is the key of the mystery.

Totally the contrary, Lady Arpington declares!—the man is a learned man, formerly a Professor of English Literature in a German University, and no connection of the Whitechapel countess whatever, a chance acquaintance at the most. He operates on Lord Fleetwood with doses of German philosophy; otherwise, a harmless creature; and has consented to wash and dress. It is my lord who has had the chief influence. And the Countess Livia now backs him in maintaining that there is nowhere a more honest young man to be found. She may have her reasons.

As for the Whitechapel Countess . . . the whole story of the Old Buccaneer and Countess Fanny was retold, and it formed a terrific halo, presage of rains and hurricane tempest, over the girl the young earl had incomprehensibly espoused to discard. Those two had a son and a daughter born abroad:—in wedlock, we trust. The girl may be as wild a one as the mother. She has a will as determined as her husband's. She is offered Esslemont, the earl's Kentish mansion, for a residence, and she will none of it until she has him down in the east of London on his knees to entreat her. The injury was deep on one side or the other. It may be almost surely prophesied that the two will never come together. Will either of them deal the stroke for freedom? And which is the likelier?

Meanwhile Lord Fleetwood and his Whitechapel Countess composed the laugh of London. Straightway Invention, the violent propagator, sprang from his

shades at a call of the great world's appetite for more, and, rushing upon stationary Fact, supplied the required. Marvel upon marvel was recounted. The mixed origin of the singular issue could not be examined, where all was increasingly funny.

Always the shout for more produced it. She and her band of Whitechapel boys were about in ambush to waylay the earl wherever he went. She stood knocking at his door through a whole night. He dared not lug her before a magistrate for fear of exposure. Once, riding in the park with a troop of friends he had a young woman pointed out to him, and her finger was levelled, and she cried: 'There is the English nobleman who marries a girl and leaves her to go selling cabbages!'

He left town for the Island, and beheld his yacht sailing the Solent:—my lady the countess was on board! A pair of Tyrolese minstrels in the square kindled his enthusiasm at one of his dinners; he sent them a sovereign; their humble, hearty thanks were returned to him in the name of *Die Gräfin von Fleetwood.*

The Ladies Endor, Eldritch, and Cowry sifted their best. They let pass incredible stories: among others, that she had sent cards to the nobility and gentry of the West End of London, offering to deliver sacks of potatoes by newly established donkey-cart at the doors of their residences, at so much per sack, bills quarterly; with the postscript, *Vive l'aristocratie!* Their informant had seen a card, and the stamp of the Fleetwood dragon-crest was on it.

He has enemies, was variously said of the persecuted nobleman. But it was nothing worse than the parasite

that he had. This was the parasite's gentle treason. He found it an easy road to humour; it pricked the slug fancy in him to stir and curl; gave him occasion to bundle and bustle his patron kindly. Abrane, Potts, Mallard, and Sir Meeson Corby were personages during the town's excitement, besought for having something to say. Petrels of the sea of tattle, they were buoyed by the hubbub they created, and felt the tipsy happiness of being certain to rouse the laugh wherever they alighted. Sir Meeson Corby, important to himself in an eminent degree, enjoyed the novel sense of his importance with his fellows. They crowded round the bore who had scattered them.

He traced the miserable catastrophe in the earl's fortunes to the cunning of the rascal now sponging on Fleetwood and trying to dress like a gentleman: a convicted tramp, elevated by the caprice of the young nobleman he was plotting to ruin. Sir Meeson quoted Captain Abrane's latest effort to hit the dirty object's name, by calling him 'Fleetwood's Mr. Woodlouse.' And was the rascal a sorcerer? Sir Meeson spoke of him in the hearing of the Countess Livia, and she, previously echoing his disgust, corrected him sharply, and said: 'I begin to be of Russett's opinion, that his fault is his honesty.' The rascal had won or partly won the empress of her sex! This Lady Livia, haughtiest and most fastidious of our younger great dames, had become the indulgent critic of the tramp's borrowed plumes! Nay, she would not listen to a depreciatory word on him from her cousin Henrietta Kirby-Levellier.

Perhaps, after all, of all places for an encounter between the Earl of Fleetwood and the countess, those

vulgar Gardens across the water, long since abandoned by the Fashion, were the most suitable. Thither one fair June night, for the sake of showing the dowager countess and her beautiful cousin, the French nobleman, Sir Meeson Corby, and others, what were the pleasures of the London lower orders, my lord had the whim to conduct them,—merely a parade of observation once round;—the ladies veiled, the gentlemen with sticks, and two servants following, one of whom, dressed in quiet black, like the peacefullest of parsons, was my lord's pugilist, Christopher Ines.

Now, here we come to history: though you will remember what History is.

The party walked round the Gardens unmolested: nor have we grounds for supposing they assumed airs of state in the style of a previous generation. Only, as it happened, a gentleman of the party was a wag; no less than the famous, well-seasoned John Rose Mackrell, bent on amusing Mrs. Kirby-Levellier, to hear her lovely laughter; and his wit and his anecdotes, both inexhaustible, proved that, as he said, 'a dried fish is no stale fish, and a smoky flavour to an old chimney story will often render it more piquant to the taste than one jumping fresh off the incident.' His exact meaning in 'smoky flavour' we are not to know; but whether that M. de St. Ombre should witness the effect of English humour upon them, or that the ladies could permit themselves to laugh, their voices accompanied the gentlemen in silvery volleys. There had been 'Mackrell' at Fleetwood's dinner-table; which was then a way of saying that dry throats made no count of the quantity of champagne imbibed, owing to the fits Rose Mackrell caused. However, there was loud laughter as

they strolled, and it was noticed; and Fleetwood crying out, 'Mackrell! Mackrell!' in delighted repudiation of the wag's last sally, the cry of 'Hooray, Mackrell!' was caught up by the crowd. They were not the primary offenders, for loud laughter in an isolated party is bad breeding; but they had not the plea of a copious dinner.

So this affair began; inoffensively at the start, for my lord was good-humoured about it.

Kit Ines, of the mercurial legs, must now give impromptu display of his dancing. He seized a partner, in the manner of a Roman the Sabine, sure of pleasing his patron; and the maid, passing from surprise to merriment, entered the quadrille perforce, all giggles, not without emulation, for she likewise had the passion for the dance. Whereby it befell that the pair footed in a way to gather observant spectators; and if it had not been that the man from whom the maid was willy-nilly snatched, conceived resentment, things might have passed comfortably; for Kit's quips and cuts and high capers, and the Sunday gravity of the barge face while the legs were at their impish trickery, double motion to the music, won the crowd to cheer. They conjectured him to be a British sailor. But the destituted man said, sailor or no sailor, —bos'en be hanged! he should pay for his whistle.

Honourably at the close of the quadrille, Kit brought her back; none the worse for it, he boldly affirmed, and he thanked the man for the short loan of her. The man had an itch to strike. Choosing rather to be struck first, he vented nasty remarks. My lord spoke to Kit and moved on. At the moment of the step, Rose Mackrell uttered something, a waggery of some

sort, heard to be forgotten, but of such instantaneous effect, that the prompt and immoderate laugh succeeding it might reasonably be taken for a fling of scorn at himself, by an injured man. They were a party; he therefore proceeded to make one, appealing to English sentiment and right feeling. The blameless and repentant maid plucked at his coat to keep him from dogging the heels of the gentlemen. Fun was promised; consequently the crowd waxed.

'My lord,' had been let fall by Kit Ines. Conjoined to 'Mackrell,' it rang finely, and a trumpeting of 'Lord Mackrell' resounded. Lord Mackrell was asked for 'more capers and not so much sauce.' Various fish took part in his title of nobility. The wag Mackrell continuing to be discreetly silent, and Kit Ines acting as a pacific rearguard, the crowd fell in love with their display of English humour, disposed to the surly satisfaction of a big street dog that has been appeased by a smaller one's total cessation of growls.

All might have gone well but for the sudden appearance of two figures of young women on the scene. They fronted the advance of the procession. They wanted to have a word with Lord Mackrell. Not a bit of it—he won't listen, turns away; and one of the pair slips round him. It 's regular imploring: 'my lord! my lord!'

O you naughty Surrey melodram villain of a Lord Mackrell! Listen to the young woman, you Mackrell, or you'll get Billingsgate! Here's Mr. Jig-and-Reel behind here, says she 's done him! By Gosh! What 's up now?

One of the young ladies of the party ahead had rushed up to the young woman dodging to stand in

Lord Mackrell's way. The crowd pressed to see. Kit Ines and his mate shouldered them off. They performed an envelopment of the gentlemen and ladies, including the two young women. Kit left his mate and ran to the young woman hitherto the quieter of the two. He rattled at her. But she had a tongue of her own and she rattled it at him. What did she say?

Merely to hear, for no other reason, a peace-loving crowd of clerks and tradesmen, workmen and their girls, young aspirants to the professions, night-larks of different classes, both sexes, there in that place for simple entertainment, animated simply by the spirit of English humour, contracted, so closing upon the Mackrell party as to seem threatening to the most orderly and apprehensive member of it, who was the baronet, Sir Meeson Corby.

He was a man for the constables in town emergencies, and he shouted. 'Cock Robin crowing' provoked a jolly round of barking chaff. The noise in a dense ring drew Fleetwood's temper. He gave the word to Kit Ines, and immediately two men dropped; a dozen staggered unhit. The fists worked right and left; such a clearing of ground was never seen for sickle or scythe. And it was taken respectfully; for Science proclaimed her venerable self in the style and the perfect sufficiency of the strokes. A bruiser delivered them. No shame to back away before a bruiser. There was rather an admiring envy of the party claiming the nimble champion on their side, until the very moderate lot of the Mackrells went stepping forward along the strewn path with sticks pointed.

If they had walked it like gentlemen, they would have been allowed to get through. An aggressive

minority, and with Cock Robin squealing for constables in the midst, is that insolent upstart thing which howls to have a lesson. The sticks were fallen on; bump came the mass. Kit Ines had to fight his way back to his mate, and the couple scoured a clearish ring, but the gentlemen were at short thrusts, affable in tone, to cheer the spirits of the ladies:—'All right, my friend, you're a trifle mistaken, it's my stick, not yours.' Therewith the wrestle for the stick.

The one stick not pointed was wrenched from the grasp of Sir Meeson Corby; and by a woman, the young woman who had accosted my lord; not a common young woman either, as she appeared when beseeching him. Her stature rose to battle heights: she made play with Sir Meeson Corby's ebony stick, using it in one hand as a dwarf quarterstaff to flail the sconces, then to dash the point at faces; and she being a woman, a girl, perhaps a lady, her cool warrior method of cleaving way, without so much as tightening her lips, was found notable; and to this degree (vouched for by Rose Mackrell, who heard it), that a fellow, rubbing his head, cried: 'Damn it all, she's clever, though!' She took her station beside Lord Fleetwood.

He had been as cool as she, or almost. Now he was maddened; she defended him, she warded and thrust for him, only for him, to save him a touch; unasked, undesired, detested for the box on his ears of to-morrow's public mockery, as she would be, overwhelming him with ridicule. Have you seen the kick and tug at the straps of the mettled pony in stables that betrays the mishandling of him by his groom? Something so did Fleetwood plunge and dart to be free of her, and

his desperate soul cried out on her sticking to him like a plaster!

Welcome were the constables. His guineas winked at their chief, as fair women convey their meanings, with no motion of eyelids; and the officers of the law knew the voice habituated to command, and answered two words of his: 'Right, my lord,' smelling my lord in the unerring manner of those days. My lord's party were escorted to the gates, not a little jeered; though they by no means had the worst of the tussle. But the puffing indignation of Sir Meeson Corby over his battered hat and torn frill and buttons plucked from his coat, and his threat of the magistrates, excited the crowd to derisive yells.

My lord spoke something to his man, handing his purse.

The ladies were spared the hearing of bad language. They, according to the joint testimony of M. de St. Ombre and Mr. Rose Mackrell, comported themselves throughout as became the daughters of a warrior race. Both gentlemen were emphatic to praise the unknown Britomart who had done such gallant service with Sir Meeson's ebony wand. He was beginning to fuss vociferously about the loss of the stick—a family stick, gold-headed, the family crest on it, priceless to the family—when Mrs. Kirby-Levellier handed it to him inside the coach.

'But where is she?' M. de St. Ombre said, and took the hint of Livia's touch on his arm in the dark.

At the silence following the question, Mr. Rose Mackrell murmured, 'Ah!'

He and the French gentleman understood that there

had been a manifestation of the notorious Whitechapel Countess.

They were two; and a slower-witted third was travelling to his ideas on the subject. Three men, witnesses of a remarkable incident in connection with a boiling topic of current scandal,—glaringly illustrative of it, moreover,—were unlikely to keep close tongues, even if they had been sworn to secrecy. Fleetwood knew it, and he scorned to solicit them; an exaction of their idle vows would be merely the humiliation of himself. So he tossed his dignity to recklessness, as the ultra-convivial give the last wink of reason to the wine-cup. Persecuted as he was, nothing remained for him but the nether-sublime of a statuesque desperation.

That was his feeling; and his way of cloaking it under light sallies at Sir Meeson and easy chat with Henrietta made it visible to her, from its being the contrary of what the world might expect a proud young nobleman to exhibit. She pitied him: she had done him some wrong. She read into him, too, as none else could. Seeing the solitary tortures behind the pleasant social mask, she was drawn to partake of them; and the mask seemed pathetic. She longed to speak a word in sympathy or relieve her bosom of tears. Carinthia had sunk herself, was unpardonable, hardly mentionable. Any of the tales told of her might be credited after this! The incorrigible cause of humiliation for everybody connected with her pictured, at a word of her name, the crowd pressing and the London world acting audience. Livia spoke the name when they had reached their house and were alone. Henrietta responded with the imperceptible shrug which is more eloquent than

a cry to tell of the most monstrous of loads. My lord, it was thought by the ladies, had directed his man to convey her safely to her chosen home, whence she might be expected very soon to be issuing and striking the gong of London again.

CHAPTER XXIV

A KIDNAPPING AND NO GREAT HARM

Ladies who have the pride of delicate breeding are not more than rather violently hurled back on the fortress it is, when one or other of the gross mishaps of circumstance may subject them to a shock: and this happening in the presence of gentlemen, they are sustained by the within and the without to keep a smooth countenance, however severe their affliction. Men of heroic nerve decline similarly to let explosions shake them, though earth be shaken. Dragged into the monstrous grotesque of the scene at the Gardens, Livia and Henrietta went through the ordeal, masking any signs that they were stripped for a flagellation. Only, the fair cousins were unable to perceive a comic element in the scene: and if the world was for laughing, as their instant apprehension foresaw it, the world was an ignoble beast. They did not discuss Carinthia's latest craziness at night, hardly alluded to it while they were in the interjectory state.

Henrietta was Livia's guest, her husband having hurried away to Vienna: 'To get money! money!' her angry bluntness explained his absence, and dealt its

blow at the sudden astounding poverty into which they had fallen. She was compelled to practise an excessive, an incredible economy:—'think of the smallest trifles!' so that her Chillon travelled unaccompanied, they were separated. Her iterations upon money were the vile constraint of an awakened interest and wonderment at its powers. She, the romantic Riette, banner of chivalry, reader of poetry, struck a line between poor and rich in her talk of people, and classed herself with the fallen and pinched; she harped on her slender means, on the enforced calculations preceding purchases, on the living in lodgings; and that miserly Lord Levellier's indebtedness to Chillon—large sums! and Chillon's praiseworthy resolve to pay the creditors of her father's estate; and of how he travelled like a common man, in consequence of the money he had given Janey—weakly, for her obstinacy was past endurance; but her brother would not leave her penniless, and penniless she had been for weeks, because of her stubborn resistance to the earl—quite unreasonably, whether right or wrong—in the foul retreat she had chosen; apparently with a notion that the horror of it was her vantage ground against him: and though a single sign of submission would place the richest purse in England at her disposal. 'She refuses Esslemont! She insists on his meeting her! No child could be so witless. Let him be the one chiefly or entirely to blame, she might show a little tact—for her brother's sake! She loves her brother? No: deaf to him, to me, to every consideration except her blind will.'

Here was the skeleton of the love match, earlier than Livia had expected.

It refreshed a phlegmatic lady's disposition for

prophecy. Lovers abruptly tossed between wind and wave may still be lovers, she knew: but they are, or the weaker of the two is, hard upon any third person who tugs at them for subsistence or existence. The condition, if they are much beaten about, prepares true lovers, through their mutual tenderness, to be bitterly misanthropical.

Livia supposed the novel economic pinches to be the cause of Henrietta's unwonted harsh judgment of her sister-in-law's misconduct, or the crude expression of it. She could not guess that Carinthia's unhappiness in marriage was a spectre over the married happiness of the pair fretted by the conscience which told them they had come together by doing much to bring it to pass. Henrietta could see herself less the culprit when she blamed Carinthia in another's hearing.

After some repose, the cousins treated their horrible misadventure as a piece of history. Livia was cool; she had not a husband involved in it, as Henrietta had; and London's hoarse laugh surely coming on them, spared her the dread Henrietta suffered, that Chillon would hear; the most sensitive of men on any matter touching his family.

'And now a sister added to the list! Will there be names, Livia?'

'The newspapers!' Livia's shoulders rose.

'We ought to have sworn the gentlemen to silence.'

'M. de St. Ombre is a tomb until he writes his Memoirs. I hold Sir Meeson under lock. But a spiced incident,—a notorious couple,—an anecdotal witness to the scene,—could you expect Mr. Rose Mackrell to contain it? The sacredest of oaths, my dear!'

That relentless force impelling an anecdotist to slaughter families for the amusement of dinner-tables, was brought home to Henrietta by her prospect of being a victim; and Livia reminding her of the excessive laughter at Rose Mackrell's anecdotes overnight, she bemoaned her having consented to go to those Gardens in mourning.

'How could Janey possibly have heard of the project to go?'

'You went to please Russett, he to please you, and that wild-cat to please herself,' said Livia. 'She haunts his door, I suppose, and follows him, like a running footman. Every step she takes widens the breach. He keeps his temper, yes, keeps his temper as he keeps his word, and one morning it breaks loose, and all that's done has to be undone. It will be—must. That extravaganza, as she is called, is fatal, dogs him with burlesque:—of all men!'

'Why not consent to meet her once, Chillon asks.'

'You are asking Russett to yield an inch on demand, and to a woman.'

'My husband would yield to a woman what he would refuse to all the men in Europe and America,' said Henrietta; and she enjoyed her thrill of allegiance to her chivalrous lord and courtier.

'No very extraordinary specimen of a newly married man, who has won the Beauty of England and America for his wife—at some cost to some people,' Livia rejoined.

There came a moisture on the eyelashes of the emotional young woman, from a touch of compassion for the wealthy man who had wished to call her wife, and was condemned by her rejection of him to call another

woman wife, to be wifeless in wedding her, despite his wealth.

'She thinks he loves her; it is pitiable, but she thinks it—after the treatment she has had. She begs to see him once.'

'And subdue him with a fit of weeping,' Livia was moved to say by sight of the tear she hated. 'It would harden Russett—on other eyes, too! Salt-water drops are like the forced agony scenes in a play: they bring down the curtain, they don't win the critics. I heard her "my husband" and saw his face.'

'You didn't hear a whimper with it,' Henrietta said. 'She's a mountain girl, not your city madam on the boards. Chillon and I had her by each hand, implored her to leave that impossible Whitechapel, and she trembled, not a drop was shed by her. I can almost fancy privation and squalor have no terrors for Janey. She sings to the people down there, nurses them. She might be occupying Esslemont—our dream of an English home! She is the destruction of the idea of romantic in connection with the name of marriage. I talk like a simpleton. Janey upsets us all. My lord was only a little queer before he knew her. His Mr. Woodseer may be encouraging her. You tell me the creature has a salary from him equal to your jointure.'

'Be civil to the man while it lasts,' Livia said, attentive to a degradation of tone in her cousin, formerly of supreme self-containment.

The beautiful young woman was reminded of her holiday in town. She brightened, and the little that it was, and the meanness of the satisfaction, darkened her. Envy of the lucky adventurer Mr. Woodseer,

on her husband's behalf, grew horridly conscious for being reproved. So she plucked resolution to enjoy her holiday and forget the contrasts of life—palaces running profusion, lodgings hammered by duns; the pinch of poverty distracting every simple look inside or out. There was no end to it, for her husband's chivalrous honour forced him to undertake the payment of her father's heavy debts. He was right and admirable, it could not be contested; but the prospect for them was a grinding gloom, an unrelieved drag, as of a coach at night on an interminable uphill flinty road.

These were her sensations, and she found it diverting to be admired; admired by many while she knew herself to be absorbed in the possession of her by one. It bestowed the before and after of her marriage. She felt she was really, had rapidly become, the young woman of the world, armed with a husband, to take the flatteries of men for the needed diversion they brought. None moved her; none could come near to touching the happy insensibility of a wife who adored her husband, wrote to him daily, thought of him by the minute. Her former worshippers were numerous at Livia's receptions; Lord Fleetwood, Lord Brailstone, and the rest. Odd to reflect on—they were the insubstantial but coveted wealth of the woman fallen upon poverty, ignoble poverty! She could not discard her wealth. She wrote amusingly of them, and fully, vivacious descriptions, to Chillon; hardly so much writing to him as entering her heart's barred citadel, where he resided at his ease, heard everything that befell about her. If she dwelt on Lord Fleetwood's kindness in providing entertainments, her ob-

ject was to mollify Chillon's anger in some degree. She was doing her utmost to gratify him, 'for the purpose of paving a way to plead Janey's case.' She was almost persuading herself she was enjoying the remarks of his friend, confidant, secretary, or what not, Livia's worshipper, Mr. Woodseer, 'who does as he wills with my lord; directs his charities, his pleasures, his opinions, all because he is believed to have wonderful ideas and be wonderfully honest.'

Henrietta wrote: 'Situation unchanged. Janey still at that place'; and before the letter was posted, she and Livia had heard from Gower Woodseer of the reported disappearance of the Countess of Fleetwood and her maid. Gower's father had walked up from Whitechapel, bearing news of it to the earl, she said.

'And the earl is much disturbed?' was Livia's inquiry.

'He has driven down with my father,' Gower said carelessly, ambiguously in the sound.

Troubled enough to desire the show of a corresponding trouble, Henrietta read at their faces.

'May it not be—down there—a real danger?'

The drama, he could inform her, was only too naked down there for disappearances to be common.

'Will it be published that she is missing?'

'She has her maid with her, a stout-hearted girl. Both have courage. I don't think we need take measures just yet.'

'Not before it is public property?'

Henrietta could have bitten her tongue for laying her open to the censure implied in his muteness. Janey perverted her.

Women were an illegible manuscript, and ladies a

closed book of the binding, to this raw philosopher, or he would not so coldly have judged the young wife, anxious on her husband's account, that they might escape another scorching. He carried away his impression.

Livia listened to a remark on his want of manners.

'Russett puts it to the credit of his honesty,' she said. 'Honesty is everything with us at present. The man has made his honesty an excellent speculation. He puts a piece on zero and the bank hands him a sackful. We may think we have won him to serve us, up comes his honesty. That's how we have Lady Arpington mixed in it—too long a tale. But be guided by me; condescend a little.'

'My dear! my whole mind is upon that unhappy girl. It would break Chillon's heart.'

Livia pished. 'There are letters we read before we crack the seal. She is out of that ditch, and it suits Russett that she should be. He 's not often so patient. A woman foot to foot against his will—I see him throwing high stakes. Tyrants are brutal; and really she provokes him enough. You needn't be alarmed about the treatment she 'll meet. He won't let her beat him, be sure.'

Neither Livia nor Gower wondered at the clearing of the mystery, before it went to swell the scandal. A young nobleman of ready power, quick temper, few scruples, and a taxed forbearance, was not likely to stand thwarted and goaded—and by a woman. Lord Fleetwood acted his part, inscrutable as the blank of a locked door. He could not conceal that he was behind the door.

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